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# MIDNIGHT TALKS

## At the Club

REPORTED

BY AMOS K. FISKE

The people's prayer, the glad diviner's theme,
The young men's vision and the old men's dream.

DRYDEN.

NEW YORK
FORDS, HOWARD, & HULBERT
1890

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BY AMOS K. FISKE

# PREFATORY NOTE.

MOST of the papers in this volume originally appeared as a series in the Sunday issues of the *New York Times*, where they excited sufficient interest to elicit many enquiries as to their possible appearance in book form. As these enquiries continued for months after the "Talks" had ceased to appear, it seemed as though the papers must have touched matters of living and enduring interest, upon which many people are thinking and craving something fresh in the thoughts of others. Hence the author feels justified in rescuing them from the quick oblivion of the newspaper, and putting them into a form which may give them a place in those circles—whether in the club or the home or the study—where talk ranges upon themes of more than trivial or ephemeral significance. The papers have been gone over carefully for this volume and expanded in some points,—from the carefully preserved notes of the "Listener"—and con-

cluded with a final contribution from the "Judge," sojourning in lands remote.

In addition to the offence of making public the conversation of his friends in the privacy of their club, the reporter of the "Midnight Talks" wishes to confess to this further peccadillo. In the interval between the publication of the "talks" in a serial way and the collection of them in this volume, he took the liberty of appropriating as his own many of the ideas and sentiments of the "Judge" and putting them forth as such in a magazine article which appeared in *The Forum*, even going so far as to "convey" bodily into that article some of the extracts from the "Judge's" Amalfi letter. As he has made his peace with those chiefly concerned, his readers will doubtless care little for this; but he wishes to forestall detection by the keen critics, if any should go so far as to look into his conduct in this matter.

AMOS K. FISKE.

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# MIDNIGHT TALKS

## AT THE CLUB.

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### I.

### THE "OWL PARTY" AT THE ASPHODEL.

WHEN I was induced by my old college friend, Tom Benedict, to join the Asphodel Club it was not with the expectation of taking part in midnight discussions of any kind: not that I am at all averse to the "wee sma' hours," for the most irksome of all things human is the conventional necessity of going to bed every night; but I presumed that if there were such diversions within those mysterious precincts they were of a hilarious kind, and my tastes in matters of conversation are quiet.

I have a notion there is "no use talk-

ing" where more than two or three are gathered together, unless it is a family party or a group of very intimate friends.

But I had not long enjoyed the luxurious ease of the Asphodel before I discovered that almost every Saturday night there was in a quiet inner room a little knot of persons holding high converse at about the time Sunday is supposed to be "ushered in" everywhere but in clubs. This knot of persons appeared to be known as the "Owl Party" by those casual members who observed the regularity of their convocation on Saturday nights and the lateness with which they indulged in their periodical talks, perhaps also with a delicate reference to the profound wisdom occasionally overheard by the light minded.

I was introduced into this party the more promptly because, to my surprise, I found that Tom Benedict was himself a member of it. I was surprised at this simply on account of Tom's character and habits, as they were familiar to me. I took him to be a man who reposed in the bosom of his family long before mid-

night any night in the week, and was a little astonished even that he should belong at all to a club that had rather a reputation for conviviality than otherwise. For Tom is not only a family man, but a rather staid person, as properly domesticated as any one you could meet in a summer's day. Very strictly brought up was Tom, and he was always submissive to discipline, and became rather a stickler for the proprieties, even for the conventionalities. He married the daughter of a clergyman, very charming in her way, a paragon of virtue and propriety, but rather narrow in her views of this life and broad in her conceptions of the superior importance of some other life. And like a dutiful husband he joined the church, became a Vestryman or some such thing, and took his part in improving the wretched human race through Sunday-schools and missions.

I like Tom right well when we are together by ourselves or with congenial friends, but on the rare occasions on which I have visited him at his home I have not found myself quite at ease.

There is too much propriety and virtuous sensibility about, for my careless ways, and I am in constant danger of hurting somebody or something, and Tom seems to be in constant fear that I will; while his wife has a kind of open-eyed, half-startled wonder at my free-and-easy remarks about people and things. I can't even smoke a cigar in their house. It is one of those peculiarly refined nests of domestic purity, in which tobacco smoke is regarded as a sort of profanation and in which it clings to curtains and hangings with wicked tenacity. I believe the delicate nostrils of Tom's wife would be offended with the fumes of a single cigar for a week afterward, even though it were smoked in the attic or the basement.

Imagine my surprise, then, that Tom should not only be a member of the Asphodel Club, but should even belong to an "Owl Party" that sat discoursing at a little round table garnished with glasses into the small hours of Sunday morning. His individual glass contained generally nothing worse than ginger ale or Apollinaris water, though he is not

averse to a glass of good wine on occasion, and I have more than once inveigled him into drinking beer at a German music garden. He took no part at all in the smoking, though I believe he half wished that he could. But how could he reconcile his wife to such late hours, and what must she say of the odor of tobacco which he can hardly help carrying home in his clothes?

The mystery was solved by Tom's relations with another member of the party, whom everybody calls "the Judge." Why everybody calls him "the Judge" can only be explained by his appearance and character, for I do not believe he ever occupied a judicial position in his life, though by nature exactly fitted for it. Nature is sometimes thwarted in her intentions by circumstances and experience in life or some peculiar perversity implanted in her favorite children. I have lately learned a good deal about the Judge's private history, having made my way rather deeply into his good graces by my quite unusual ability as a listener. There is

nothing a good talker appreciates like a good listener.

The Judge's father was one of the comparatively early New England manufacturers, one of those patriarchal old fellows who antedated stock corporations and owned the whole neighborhood about their mills, and were looked up to as beneficent autocrats. With good opportunities for "schooling," the Judge was "brought up to the business" by his father, and though he learned all about wool and dye-stuffs and the art of combining them in fair grades of material for wearing apparel, he was not satisfied to devote his life to "the business." He was an omnivorous reader of books, and had made occasional trips to Providence and Boston, and even New York, on business errands, and got an ambition for a wider world of knowledge and activity than a factory-village afforded, even though he were some time to own the village.

At the age of twenty-one he could endure it no longer. He wanted a college education, but it seemed rather late to

begin: so he took a course in a scientific school, mingling much language and literature with his science; then he spent a year at a medical school, but concluded that it did not open the way he was seeking in life and betook himself to a law-school. He completed this course and began to practice, but was smitten with a desire to travel; and having ample means, passed three years in foreign parts, studying men and things, all the while feeding his appetite for books. So it was that, although favored with wealth and early opportunities, he had been so swerved from his proper course by that "mill business" in his youth, that he found himself at thirty years of age without settled occupation, but with much experience and observation and the broad views which they give to a vigorous intellect and an honest mind.

That must have been quite thirty years ago, and now the Judge is a widower, having one married daughter, with whom he lives, and two sons—one a rising young college professor, and the other a man of practical affairs out West, making

his fortune in railroads. The Judge is neither a lawyer by profession, nor a scientific or literary person, nor yet what is generally meant by a "business man." He seems to read everything worth reading, and talks wonderfully about books, but I doubt if he ever wrote a line for publication or ever cared to. He is familiar with all manner of scientific facts, theories, and conclusions, and is never at a loss in dealing with them in conversation, but he never lectured or taught or wrote about science in his life. As to business, he has long been occupied with investments of his own, the care of estates and properties for other people, and the oversight of financial interests in this country for certain foreign clients who have found him out from time to time, either here or on his frequent trips abroad. In short, the Judge is a busy, multifarious sort of person, with a goodly income, and shows no sign of wearing out. His great delight seems to be conversing with a few congenial spirits. His eyes are dark and glowing, his thick, close-cut hair quite gray, his face

fresh, benignant and bare of beard, save for a silver clasp that comes down from his hair in front of each ear. His manner is calm and serene but indicative always of deep sincerity.

It so happened that Tom Benedict's father was a great friend of the Judge, and when he died during Tom's college days and before the latter had reached his majority, Tom found himself and his property under the charge of the Judge, as executor of his father's will and guardian of himself. He was treated in such a very fatherly way that he conceived a most affectionate reverence for his guardian. The Judge had even been his confidant in his love affair with the daughter of another old friend of his father, the Rev. Mr. Willis, and his paternal offices in vouching for the good character and associations of the young man had had much to do with the happy issue of the suit. Tom had also consulted his guardian in regard to his profession, and had been materially assisted by him in getting a start in the practice of the law.

And moreover Tom's wife, naturally enough, had full confidence in the Judge, for he had been intimate with her father, also, and then he has that infinite tact which enables a man to adapt himself to all sorts and conditions of people, to understand their points of view, and sympathize with their sensibilities, even though they are somewhat narrow, provided always that they are sincere and earnest people. So when the Judge proposed that Tom be brought out a little more among the people of this world by joining the Asphodel Club, the wife made no objection. The late Saturday nights must have cost her a pang or two, and nothing but the assurance that the Judge was always there, and her entire confidence in the safety of his moral and social guardianship, could, I am sure, have reconciled her to the late hours on the eve of the Sabbath. This was Tom's only opportunity of close association at frequent intervals with his old friend, and that association was very dear to him; so the arrangement was acquiesced in, apparently without any domestic strain.

Those Saturday nights were the Judge's only diversion outside of his daughter's home, to which he was much attached, and his extreme fondness for talking to a group of appreciative listeners made it a sort of self-indulgence which he would have found it about as hard to give up as the victim of a vicious habit finds it difficult to avoid his periodical "spree." The Judge had been originally brought into the club by his old boyhood and schoolday friend, Colonel Bloodgood, the other member of the "Owl Party," and by him he had been first inveigled into the regular Saturday night visits and the consequent discussions. It was a queer case of friendship, that of the Judge and the Colonel, and if it had not begun in boyhood I am sure it could not have begun at all. It could have been based only on a very intimate interior mutual knowledge. The grounds of sympathy must have been deep, for in all external characteristics in their mature years the two friends would have seemed anything but congenial spirits.

The Colonel has been a real colo-

nel in the regular army and has seen much and varied service; he has also had vast experience of the world in his own and other countries. He rather prides himself on being a "man of the world," and taking very "little stock" in things that do not pertain to this mundane life. He has "views" and does not hesitate to express them with great vigor and candor.

The Colonel is tall and square-shouldered, and carries the burden of his sixty years and his varied experience without bending. The fierce floridity of his face is rather intensified by the whiteness of his big mustache, the baldness of his cranial dome, and the curiously persistent blackness of his heavy eyebrows. From these contrasted surroundings the deep blue of his eyes shines out like a piece of art-work, or a vivid Chinese painting on porcelain. His talk has a fierce emphasis, in keeping with his looks, and is a little too much garnished with those profane particles which unrestrained natures are apt to find so convenient for purposes of intense expression. The Colonel rather

cheapens his expletives as a means of emphasizing statements and opinions by too lavish use of them, an illustration of how habit overcomes discretion in the use of language. The Colonel is a man of leisure, nowadays, and fond of good living, and especially of life at clubs, which is always good living for those who can afford to make it so. Unlike the Judge, he is not reserved in his acquaintances, but knows everybody and talks freely with all whom he knows. He goes to dinners and theatres, and the only thing he seems to be averse to is fashionable society. He submits to a good deal of it and always has the appearance of enjoying himself on social occasions, yet he protests that it bores him and makes him feel like rushing off to play dominoes in a beer saloon.

But of all men else the Colonel admires the Judge, and never misses an opportunity of being with him and getting him to talking in the presence of others. It is the presence of others that gives zest to the Colonel's enjoyment of the Judge's conversation, for he pro-

fesses to know him through and through and takes special pride in astonishing others with him, not being himself in the least astonished with his calm wisdom and penetrating judgment. The Colonel is convivial in his tastes, and while Tom Benedict sips his Apollinaris and the Judge spends the whole session in disposing of a glass of light Rhine wine, he orders frequent brandy-and-sodas, and good-naturedly chaffs the others for drinking their "wishy-washy stuff." Moreover, he smokes incessantly, while the most the Judge does in that line is to relight his cigar in the lulls of conversation and let it go out again. Tom smokes not at all; while I, moderate at other times, keep pretty well up with the Colonel on these special occasions, being no talker, but only a meditative listener.

When I first joined in with the "Owl Party" on Tom's introduction, I expected to be bored with it for a while and then to drop out, for I had a feeling that while social chat in a club was all very well, anything like the sober discussions which Tom said they always had, was sure to

be uninteresting and unprofitable. People are everlastingly exchanging opinions upon things they know nothing about, and have really thought nothing about, and they weary me with their commonplaces and platitudes, or their fragmentary and superficial "views" of all sorts of things. But I soon found myself a fascinated listener, especially to the Judge's mild and mellifluous discourses. He seemed to see all sides of a thing, to look around it and through it and to be swayed by no prejudices about it. "What a book he could make!" said Tom one night, or rather one morning about two o'clock, as we sauntered out from the club-house, each intent on the nearest conveyance homeward.

"Well, I don't know about that," I replied, "I doubt if he could make anything out of writing a book. He would be cramped, with a pen in his fingers, and his inspiration might be wanting if he had nobody to talk with. But if a fellow were to hitch on to him in the capacity of a Boswell and write down what he says, something might be made of him."

Tom said nothing in reply, but I had put the idea into my own head that I might quietly store up all I could carry of the "Owl Party" talk and make as full notes as I could when I got home, and perhaps "work them up" afterward. Anyhow, I determined to see what I could do, and if it did not "pan out" in a literary way no harm would be done. I should have the benefit, anyway, and the rest of the world could worry along without knowing what it had lost.

I find it is no easy matter to report a conversation on the plan of remembering until you get home and then jotting down. The best part of it has evaporated and gone. The manner, the tones and inflections are unreportable, and the treacherous memory loses much of the best that is intrusted to it; so that when the substance of the talk is put into new sentences it doesn't seem the same, somehow. But, still, much of the real substance may be saved, the ideas may be pinned down and preserved, though they compare with the original expression much as fluffy and dusty butterflies

transfixed in a case compare with gay flights of them on the wing in the sunlight.

It is then, on the principle of saving some of the substance, though failing to reproduce the manner of expression, that this experiment is made of reporting the midnight talks of the "Owl Party" at the Asphodel Club.

## II.

### THE "OWLS" DISCOURSE ON TEMPERANCE.

I CAME in a little late one night and found the Colonel had been inveighing against "fanatical" temperance people and denouncing with especial vehemence those impracticable "cranks" who would prohibit all making and selling of drinks that intoxicate.

"Their fundamental principle is wrong," he exclaimed, just as I joined the party. "The total abstinence which they seek to enforce upon everybody is not sound in theory or in practice. A moderate amount of stimulant is good for many people and necessary for some." And he took a pull at his brandy-and-soda with unusual gusto.

"To that extent I am inclined to agree with you," said the Judge, in his undogmatic way. "Yet we must all ad-

mit the evils and abuses to which the drinking habit is apt to lead and the terrible consequences which do in fact flow from it, and I don't see how we can deny the right of society to protect itself against these by every reasonable means. Total abstinence from stimulants, like absolute prudence in eating and invariable wisdom in the care of health, would doubtless prevail with a perfected human race surrounded by millennial conditions; but this generation has inherited imperfections and defects, tainted with the weakness and vices of human nature for thousands of years. We cannot expect to get rid of these all at once. There are feeble stomachs, sluggish livers, inadequate lungs, and abnormal nervous systems, all craving to be set right and struggling with their disadvantages to get their owners through life somehow; and the tempers, sentiments, and opinions even, of the latter are influenced by these defects. Their characters are to a great extent subject to their infirmities, which are the cause of beliefs and unbeliefs, of domestic infelicity and social

irregularities, of wickedness and crime. Just how to deal with them we do not know; least of all do those who are most subject to them. But I have no doubt that stimulants have their use,—that they were made for something else than to exercise the quality of self-denial; and I suppose a craving implanted in human nature, though it may become abnormal and destructive, is grounded in a real need. Did it ever strike you how apt total abstainers are to become the victims of physical ailments, for which they resort to 'bitters' and patent nostrums, the chief virtue of which is the alcohol disguised in their composition? Yes, I am convinced that total abstinence is not a sound doctrine in the present state of human development, and I believe, on the whole, the virtue of self-denial—or what is better, self-control—would be more fully and firmly developed by teaching temperance than by teaching abstinence.

"But the conditions of life make a great difference, and people do not yet sufficiently appreciate the wide difference

between life in cities and life in the country."

"I appreciate it," broke in the Colonel. "Why, in this very matter of drinking, country people are so narrow and intolerant that they think if a man has a bottle of wine at dinner or takes a drink even once a day he is a drunkard, or well on the way to become one. They look upon him as a kind of outcast. I knew a young fellow, as worthy and right-meaning a chap as you would wish to see, who made a visit to his native place, down in Maine. Everybody was quite struck with admiration for him until, coming across a city acquaintance on a fishing excursion, he was discovered drinking with him at a tavern in a neighboring town. I'll be blanked * if it didn't make so much talk and gossip, and turn feeling so much against the fellow that he felt as if he were looked upon as a gone case. He cut his visit short, and swore he would never go to the benighted neighborhood again."

* We really must find some euphemism for the Colonel's points of emphasis.

"Well, now, there is a reason for that state of feeling in a country place," mildly responded the Judge. "If you are very familiar with life in such places, you know that it is so barren of variety, of diversion for the mind, of occupation for the attention at leisure times, that habits are easily fixed. If a young man begins to drink at all there, and to visit bar-rooms, ten to one it will grow to a constant practice and ruin him. The people go one way or the other almost inevitably. Hence they think their only safety is in total abstinence, and look with horror upon any departure from it. They have no comprehension of the different conditions under which life passes in a city, and cannot acquire it by an occasional bewildering visit. That is why a general system of laws relating to this matter, applying alike to a whole State, seems to me an absurdity. It is like extending a city police system into the rural districts, or attempting to run a town-meeting in New York. For country legislators to make excise laws for cities is like having a set of farmers draw

up the regulations for conducting a distant manufacturing establishment; the only way the business could be run would be by ignoring the regulations: and so we are continually violating our country-made excise laws; which is a bad thing, but unavoidable. Nothing weakens respect for all law like having laws thrust upon a people which they will not obey; but the fault is in the making of the laws."

"You believe in local option, then, and not in prohibition at all," suggested Tom Benedict.

"The phrase 'local option' as it is generally used, implies prohibition where the people choose to have it. I cannot say that I believe in that, unless I am allowed to define the prohibition. A man who does not believe in total abstinence as a universal principle, like truth-telling and common honesty, cannot reasonably defend the policy of absolutely prohibiting the making and selling of intoxicating liquors. Even if it were admitted that all drinking is bad, it would not follow that the majority would be

justified in so far disregarding personal liberty as to prevent it by law. But if we claim that drinking stimulants in moderation and reason is not wrong, not even injurious, we must respect the right of people to buy drink. Still, I do not think the existence of bar-rooms and drinking-saloons necessary to that right. A man's right to buy bread and milk is not interfered with, even if there is not a place on every block or on any block where he can drop in and indulge in these luxuries standing at a counter or sitting at a table. It would do no harm if there were, perhaps; but excessive drinking is admitted to be bad, so bad for the general interests of society that society is bound to protect itself against the consequences. Now, these numerous bar-rooms and saloons where people go to drink and for no other purpose are undoubtedly nurseries of intemperance and disorder and all sorts of misery and crime. I would not interfere with the right to buy beer or even whiskey yet I would be glad if it were possible to suppress these drinking-places."

"But you don't think it is possible, of course?" queried the Colonel.

"Not here, and now," the Judge replied. "We can only take such measures as may be practicable to limit their number and lessen the evil they do, and make such gains in restriction from time to time as the people will uphold. But just here comes in my 'local option' idea. In country places not only is drinking more apt to lead to ruinous intemperance than in the city when once it is started upon, but a drinking-saloon is much less a mere place of business, and much more a centre of evil and a nuisance. In town, boys and young men pass saloons by the score and never think of going in. They know none of the people there and nobody tries to entice them to enter. In the country, everybody knows everybody else, including the saloon-keeper and the loafers about his place, and the association is so close and the resources for spending leisure time so few that young fellows are apt to be drawn in. They do not go to take a drink and come out, but to sit and exchange coarse talk and keep on

drinking. Country people are justified in regarding bar-rooms and drinking-saloons as nuisances and in wishing to suppress them. In many cases they can do it, and I would give them the option of doing it. This is quite different from denying a man the right to drink what he pleases so long as he does not abuse it, or depriving him of the chance of buying what he wants for consumption at his own home. His habits there cannot properly be a matter of legislation, but must be the subject of moral and religious teaching.

"There is another thing we have to recognize in our cities, and that is the foreign elements. The idea of suppressing all drinking because there is such a thing as drunkenness, which does an infinite deal of harm, seems to have its origin in the English part of our brains if not in the Puritan compartments of them only. A Frenchman gives his boy of ten or twelve a glass of light wine at dinner without the slightest notion of harm or danger to his future habits. We see whole families of quiet and orderly Ger-

mans in their beer-saloons, all sipping beer, even to children in arms. They see no more harm in it than in sipping buttermilk, and are utterly unable to comprehend the feelings of those who regard their customs with a sort of horror. The Frenchman knows that drinking wine at table is not of itself likely to lead to excesses, and the German has no sort of notion that family beer-drinking is the precursor of drunkenness and misery. You might as well tell him that tea-drinking will lead to the horrors of the madhouse.

"I am inclined to think that familiarity with these mild forms of drinking is a safeguard rather than a danger. The worst cases of drunkenness I ever knew in persons of respectable origin were those of men brought up under the most rigid restrictions. Some natures are in a constant state of insurrection under such restrictions, and when once they break away from them they go beyond all reasonable limits. Fellows who become wild or fast at twenty or twenty-one and get bad habits fixed upon them

are pretty apt to be those who were kept under the closest restraint before. Now, with these foreign elements in our population, with their freer notions and their inherited customs, what is the use of adopting the English Puritan spirit in trying to suppress intemperance?"

"The English Puritans were not particularly temperate in the matter of drinking," interjected the Colonel.

"Perhaps not, but they were somewhat addicted to enforcing upon others such restrictions as they deemed to be good for the purification of mankind, without regard to what those others might deem to be good for themselves. The idea that the majority or the ruling party may prescribe the habits and practices of the community derives much sanction from those godly Puritans. I believe that the infusion of the more genial spirit of the French and Germans is a mighty good thing for this country and for the cause of individual liberty.

"But after all, it is little that legislation can do for the cause of temperance. It can suppress nuisances, and by putting

dram-selling under close regulation make the business as actually conducted more respectable and less mischievous. It may diminish somewhat the facility of the Avernian descent. Where regulation in this as in other matters of human conduct needs most to be applied is to the individual, and he has to be induced to apply it for himself from some motive or other. The good old scheme of temperance reform by moral suasion seems to have gone out of vogue since political prohibition came in; but appeals to reason and conscience and to the moral sense and domestic sentiments are much more effective in this matter than the resort to legislation. If we could really make the people temperate in their habits, questions of prohibition and restriction would easily ṣettle themselves. It is better to convince than to coerce, to reform the people than to reform the laws. There is a good deal in the claims of these personal-liberty fellows. Personal liberty is at the bottom of our institutions, and when you attack it you excite a revolt. Our task should be, not

to suppress liberty, but to make it safe. As we need to educate our electors rather than take the suffrage away from them, so we need to lead the people to be temperate rather than prevent them from getting anything to drink.

"But what has become of all the temperance societies, with their impassioned exhortations, their pledges, their bands of hope, their cold-water brigades, and the rest of it? They have been mostly killed or paralyzed by the Prohibition movement, which has made temperance a political instead of a moral question. Nobody is reformed by politics; and legislation can only aid and support, it cannot produce, moral and social reform. There are Francis Murphy, Mabie and English, still going about the country preaching the gospel of abstinence from rum and refusing to be suppressed by political Prohibition; but what are so few in such a field? They accomplish some good, and those they save are worth the saving; but their method is going under, overwhelmed by the flood of Prohibitionism in politics.

"All decent people believe in temperance, very many believe in total abstinence, but few believe in prohibition, or ever will. It is really opposed to the principles and methods of free institutions. Why are there not societies and brotherhoods, lecturers and exhorters in the field nowadays to promote temperance, and especially to save the young from drifting into intemperance? I suspect that the Prohibition Party is mainly responsible for the paralysis of real temperance reform by diverting effort from the good that might be done to an end that cannot be attained—and, indeed, is not desirable.

"But there is one great organization in existence whose object is supposed to be the doing of good to mankind which seems to me very negligent of this particular field of effort, and that is the Christian church."

"Oh no!" exclaimed Colonel Bloodgood, with a hoarse, cynical laugh. "Oh no! Judge, there you are wrong. The object of the church is not supposed to be the doing of good to mankind, but

the making of people believe things that most of them won't believe, and the bringing together of those who profess to believe them to congratulate each other that they are better than other men are and to sustain each other in their delusion. Oh no! if mankind will not be saved according to certain dogmas of belief it can go its way to the everlasting bonfire, for all the churches."

"Ah, well, now," mildly resumed the Judge, "I expected you to break out against the churches. But I tell you, with all their short-comings, they are a saving element. They are mostly made up of really good people, who want to do good to mankind. What I complain of is that they have become too exclusive and are too much given over to reiterating week after week a lot of sentiments more or less wholesome to people who like to be reminded of what they think and feel, or what they ought to think and feel, or what they think they ought to think and feel, but who do not greatly need the reminder. Yet here is the great mass of the poor, of the unbe-

lieving, of the ignorant and vicious—in short, the part of mankind that needs regenerating and reforming and saving—and it seems to me the Church is doing mighty little to help them, compared to what it might do. It is engaged in saving those who are safe, in healing those who are well, in finding those who are not lost. The main trouble is undoubtedly that they insist too much upon beliefs and doctrines, and are not sufficiently devoted to doing good for its own sake. If they would leave all their creeds and doctrines in the background and go into reform-work for its present results, much more would be accomplished.

"Now, here is this matter of temperance. To preach temperance to the average congregation is nothing. To teach it in mission schools and chapels is little. Why doesn't every Christian church make itself a real agency for temperance reform and go to work reclaiming the lost and saving those that are in danger, not from the pains and penalties of a vague hereafter, but from

the degradation that besets them here and now? Never mind what they will believe or won't believe in theology. They may be convinced that it is better for them and their families in this life to be sober, industrious, and self-respecting than to be drunken and worthless; they may be induced and helped to exercise self-restraint for their own earthly well-being, and that is the great need. I don't think the Christian church is doing its proper work, by any means."

"No, and it never will until it revises and amends its constitution and stands upon a broad basis on the ground instead of being perched on a tower constructed in the dark ages," growled the Colonel. "However, the tower is crumbling; that's one comfort."

## III.

### THE JUDGE FINDS THE SHEPHERDS NEGLECTING THE SHEEP.

"YOU were speaking the last time we were here," remarked Benedict deferentially to the Judge, "of the neglect of the churches to do the work of temperance reform. Don't you think they inculcate temperance as well as other virtues in their teachings?"

"O yes, of course, to those who come regularly under their teaching, and who, for the most part, do not need it. Members of churches and people who regularly 'attend Divine service' are not drunkards, or in much danger of becoming so; and this, not so much on account of the preaching, but as a matter of surroundings and influences, of association and the consequent habits. It is a congenitally bad nature that would grow up vicious in the midst of a virtuous family,

good society, sound influences, and all the educational advantages. It seems to me that the object of the Gospel, if we may judge by the action of its great Proclaimer, was to redeem the bad, not to save the good; and the real work of the churches should be to regenerate those elements of society whose condition we are deploring so much and doing so little for. The Fifth Avenue congregations would do well enough if they claimed only to be moral, religious, and social clubs;—and I am afraid that is about what they are."

"Yes," answered Tom, resolutely, "but the churches are not all on Fifth Avenue and Murray Hill. They are among the poor and degraded, too; and are they not trying to reclaim and bring in all they can reach?"

"All they can reach—how and with what?" exclaimed the Judge, with a bit of warmth in his manner. "Where are the largest funds expended, and for what purpose? To what are the real intellect and resources of the churches devoted but maintaining services in costly build-

ings for the satisfaction of well-dressed and comfortable people? The poorest talents and the scantiest funds go to attempts to 'reclaim,' as you call it, here and there. Reclaim from what and to what? Not so much from poverty and ignorance and vice to decency and comfort as from what is technically known as 'sin,' and to what is technically known as 'faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.' These things have become so far technicalities of the Church that they absolutely stand in the way of the work of real salvation. It seems to me that allowing for the differences in the progress of the human race, the Church is getting to be very much what the synagogue was when Jesus appeared as a teacher and reformer in Judæa. It is bound by traditions and observances, and belongs to the 'respectable classes,' while the sheep are wandering again without any shepherds.

"This applies particularly to populous cities and towns and to what we call the working-classes. I hate the cant of that expression. Do we not all belong

to working-classes, except the loafers and tramps, whether rich or poor? But take those who, on account of humble capacity or narrow circumstances, work with their hands for a bare subsistence, the mass of the poor and the ignorant, if you will, they make up the majority, both socially and politically, and the fate of society rests with them. What is the wealth and intellect of society doing for them? What is the Church doing for them? It is in their ranks that intemperance and other excesses and vices are most destructive. They are the people whom the organized forces of religion and morality ought to reach."

"But," insisted Tom, "they are all the time trying to reach them, and if they will not come into the fold are the shepherds to blame for letting them wander?"

"Yes," replied the Judge almost impatiently. "For what is the fold that they provide, and what is the call they address to the sheep? Is it a fold of sober habits and decent living, of better views of human life and worldly duty, or is it a

fold of faith, of belief, in which the vague and incomprehensible are to be accepted as a condition of shelter? Is the call a call to comfort and a better condition here below, or a call to an intangible reward hereafter, coupled with a threat of punishment that nobody heeds any longer?"

"Good!" exclaimed the Colonel, "you are coming around to my position, Judge."

"Don't be sure of that until you know what my position is. I am not talking about matters of belief just now, but of the way of reaching and reforming people, and I tell you it can no longer be done by preaching doctrines at them. They don't believe your doctrines, and most of them are determined not to believe them; but their rejection of theological teachings does not relieve the church of the duty of trying to regenerate the lives and habits of those who need it. Teaching dogmas first and morals afterward is the wrong way to go to work. It may be that the doctrines are outworn and outgrown by the human

race, but the fundamental fault is in making them the condition of material salvation.

"The Christian Church has very largely lost its hold upon the people who need to be guided and controlled in this life. You can no longer make people content with a hard lot in this life by promising them a reward in the life to come. They are confined to this 'bank and shoal of time,' and want a little comfort here. They are dubious about the life to come. You can't reconcile them any longer to what they believe to be injustice and wrong by telling them what is to become of the oppressor after death, and that the oppressed will then go free and the humble be exalted. They are apt to be contemptuous of this sort of promise. They want wrongs righted now, and they are bound to exert their power to get it done, and that power once exerted with anything like union would be terrible. Lack of union alone deprives it of danger to the social fabric.

"What these people need is sympathy and help and guidance, and they

are not getting it—of a kind that does them much good. They are distrustful of the 'respectable classes,' who take such good care of themselves and who control the churches and religious organizations. They look upon those who gain wealth and control property as using their abilities and their advantages selfishly and greedily, to get possession of more than their fair share of the good things of this life and as drawing to themselves more of the products of the toil of the millions than justly belongs to them, and trying to keep those who do the bulk of the work in independence and subjection. And I tell you they have too much reason for feeling that way. They also feel that the Church as an organization and a power in society is on the side of the rich and 'respectable,' and out of sympathy with the poor in their struggles."

"And they have too much reason for feeling that way, too," interjected the Colonel.

"Certainly they have, altogether too much. How much do the high-priced

ministers up town condemn the grasping selfishness of capital and inculcate upon their wealthy hearers the duty of doing full justice to the humble workingmen? Does the Christianity of to-day either literally or figuratively require any man to sell what he has and give to the poor, or even to forego any of the advantages of his position to benefit the condition of others? Do the preachers venture to condemn the most iniquitous practices in business and politics where the power of money is used to increase and perpetuate the advantage of capital over labor? Even the poorer churches situated in the midst of those who most need restraint and guidance, are largely sustained and almost wholly controlled as to policy and methods by the richer element in 'the Church.' They accomplish little in their way and would never be allowed to adopt the means by which more might be accomplished."

"What means are those?" queried Benedict, as if rather afraid of the answer.

"Throwing aside the everlasting effort to 'convict of sin' and 'convert to faith,'"

and endeavoring to reclaim to virtue and better living! There is where the whole power and resources of the Church ought to be brought to bear; and they are not. Hence it is losing its conservative power. The people are looking to Communism and Socialism and visionary methods of reform in their condition, and going astray in many of their efforts to right what they believe to be wrongs, and what to some extent at least are so, and neither religion nor morality stands much in their way. Labor unions are a good thing, a necessary thing; but what could be worse than their keeping a man out of employment and trying to drive him to starvation because he refuses to join one? What could be more unjust than their stopping a man's business because he will not discharge workmen for no reason except that they do not choose to belong to a union and submit their rights to a committee? What could be meaner than their forcing one man's workmen to leave him because some other man has not treated his workmen fairly? Misguided men are doing such things and

many others which the moral code and religion alike forbid.

"The moral nature of mankind is apparently lapsing from discipline and being governed by expediency. In business, in politics, in 'labor circles,' people do not seem to inquire with much anxiety whether a thing is right, whether it is just, whether it is in accordance with the laws of God; but whether it will pay, whether it will succeed, whether it will accomplish the end. When those who stand highest in the Church and contribute most liberally to convert the heathen follow this principle, without reproval from their pastors and without losing any of the odor of sanctity, what is to be expected of those who are in the darkness of ignorance and sin?

"The old motives and sanctions of religion seem to have lost their force, as presented in our day. You cannot reach the 'unregenerate' with them. They are based upon certain views of this life and the life to come and their relations to each other that have lost their hold. You can no longer arouse the mass of the

people with ideas that seem to be irrelevant to their condition and their needs. Anyhow they will not accept them, and are beginning to ask awkward questions. Nay, those in the churches who subscribe to a formal acceptance of these views show in their daily walk and conversation that they have no real faith in them. Their beliefs afford no vital force to their lives and conduct. Even the ministers who still preach these views of man's relations to this life and another life are full of doubts about their creeds and doctrines. They hang on to them in a formal way because they have been sanctioned and sanctified by traditions and decrees which they are reluctant to admit were not for all time."

"Well, what would you do?" asked Benedict in perplexity, "give up faith and religion, the Bible, the Gospel, everything that has been held sacred and divine, and turn the church into a moral and material improvement society?"

"O, there need not be so much giving up as all that, though I think conceptions of what is sacred and divine need to

be changed to correspond to the knowledge and thought of the present age; but a great moral and material improvement society we do greatly need, and if the Christian Church does not serve that purpose, pray, what is it to do for mankind in the future, and how is this need to be supplied? I think it is the proper business of Christianity and the Church to regenerate mankind in this world and for this world, if they are to justify their existence to this generation and the next. I take it as a fundamental principle that whatever makes people better here will improve their chances in any possible hereafter, and until you find means of making their earthly life better, it is useless to concern yourself about some other on their account. The lives should be taken in their natural order,—this one first.

"But I had no notion of wandering into theological discussion. My point is that the Christian Church is not doing the work which belongs to it to-day; that it is not adapting its organization and agencies to that work; that it is as an

institution in the position to do this, and society is suffering because it is not done. The sheep are wandering in the wilderness for lack of shepherds whose voice they will heed. The folds are not wide enough, they are not easy of access, and the voices that call are forbidding and threatening rather than inviting and winning. It is time for a new reformation of some kind."

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Nobody felt prepared to dispute these statements at the moment or to discuss such deep problems as were suggested, and the party broke up.

## IV.

### THE "OWLS" TALK ABOUT SUNDAY OBSERVANCE.

THE next time I was present at the midnight session of the "Owls," there had been a desultory talk for an unusual length of time on various trivial things, and it looked as though there was to be no serious discourse, when Tom Benedict remarked uneasily that it was already Sunday morning.

"Well, what of it?" retorted the Colonel. "What better use can we make of Sunday morning than to exchange honest thought about things that concern mankind? We have been rather frivolous while it was Saturday night, now let's be serious. By the way, Judge, what do you think of Sunday observance, anyway?"

"I believe thoroughly in observing Sunday as different from other days,"

replied the Judge gravely, "but I think that as a rule, a very poor use is made of it; the strict religious observance insisted upon by so many good people does more harm than good. I do not mean, of course, that anything they or others do in the way of religious observance does harm to them or anybody else, but the general strictness insisted on does harm by preventing many profitable uses of the day from which a great general benefit might come."

"But you would not have it simply a day of rest and amusement?" queried Benedict.

"Not simply that. I would have it a day of rest from ordinary labor, so far as practicable, and would resist any encroachment upon it as such, and I see no objection to its being a day of amusement, so far as amusement is innocent and harmless. In fact, I consider that one of the most legitimate uses to put it to. The people need re-creation, in the strict sense of the word, after their week of toil and business. Rest is essential; worship and religious exercises are good,

but a fair share of amusement is good, too. The people will get their amusement in some form in spite of the Sabbatarians; and where the harm comes in is in trying so to restrict it as to make the indulgence less orderly and innocent than it might be; and, still more, in so barbarously narrowing the opportunities for instruction and mental and moral benefit. Sunday ought to be a great day for instruction and improvement for all classes of people.

"I have an entire sympathy with any kind of worship that suits the feelings of those who take part in it; but, under present religious conditions, which you know I do not think are what they ought to be, the vast majority of the people in a great city like this have little or no share in regular Sunday worship, and if they did generally take part in it they could not be expected to devote the whole day to it. Why should the good, pious people wish to restrict the use of the day to worship and either weariness or religious dissipation? The wealth, the intellect, and the moral character of the

community, and especially the religious spirit, ought to be devoted on this weekly day of leisure to the work of enlightening and improving those who are in need of it."

"You mean, I suppose, that libraries and reading rooms and museums and picture galleries should be open on Sunday," said Benedict. "I am a churchman myself, but I am inclined to agree with you there."

"I mean a good deal more than that," replied the Judge. "That those institutions should be closed just when they might do the most good I consider to be simply heathenish, un-Christian, almost inhuman. Of course they should be open, and there should be more of them, with all their facilities for rational enjoyment and for mental and moral improvement freely accessible to all. Our wealthy men, if they had a proper sense of their obligation to the community in which their wealth is made, would see that these places were multiplied and enriched until the treasures of science and art and literature were open to the study and

use of all who could or would profit by them. It would create an immense influence for good, which would contribute to the comfort and safety of the community, and be indirectly as much a benefit to the rich as to the poor. No great benefit would come from having all these things if they were locked up on Sunday, which is the only time that the great mass of the people could avail themselves of them.

"Perhaps that is one reason why we are so poor in them. The Sunday suppression prevents the demand for them from being felt, prevents their vast utility from being demonstrated, and discourages the munificence that might otherwise be displayed. Why, to my mind religious people and Christian churches ought to *demand* the opening of such institutions on Sunday as a help to the great work of regenerating and elevating mankind, to which nominally they are themselves devoted. They are now blindly obstructing and hindering it by their narrow views of the day which Christ said was made for man. In fact

we have no Christian Sunday now, but a kind of distorted copy of the Jewish Sabbath of Moses, which had a purpose in its time very different from that which needs to be served to-day by consecrating one day in the week."

"But you said you meant more than opening libraries and museums," suggested Tom, as the Judge set out to relight his cigar, which he had held between his fingers while he talked.

"Yes, I do; a good deal more," and he laid the cigar, unlighted, on the edge of the table, as if something of more weight than smoking was on his mind just then. "Some time ago, last week, wasn't it? I spoke about the short-comings of the churches in the matter of reclaiming the people from the sordid conditions of life, from ignorant views of their own needs and the methods of meeting them, from intemperance and vice, and all the evils that beset the race when unenlightened. I spoke of their insistence upon doctrines and beliefs which the people will not accept, as standing in the way of their real work,

and of the close corporation of wealth and respectability in the churches as being inconsistent with real Christianity and its purposes.

"Well, now, I think Sunday should be eminently a day for this work of regenerating mankind. ('Regenerating' is a good word when it is not abused.) It should be a day not simply for preaching what somebody regards as the gospel of salvation in the life to come, but for teaching whatever pertains to men's well-being in the life that now is. We have our educated and talented people, our men of experience and ideas, and I think we might have a good deal of philanthropic zeal aroused for diffusing the benefit of what they know and think among those who have little opportunity for reaching right opinions on matters that most nearly concern themselves. It seems to me this philanthropic disposition might be developed and directed by opening the channels for it and by making an organized effort. It would not be easy for any one to build up a new organization for the purpose,

or to secure the opening of new channels ; but there stands the Church, ready organized, with great possibilities of power and influence. There it stands, a tremendous obstruction, instead of leading the way and setting the work on foot.

"Why, this city of New York ought to be full of gathering-places for the people, scattered through all its quarters, ample enough to accommodate all comers, and on every Sunday they ought to be centres of instruction and elevating influence, varied with relaxation and harmless amusement. They should be plain and inexpensive buildings, but rich in appliances for mental and moral stimulus. They should have appropriate stores of literature, attractive features for ease and comfort, but, above all, they should provide means of instruction, classes for those who need them, but mainly lectures and talks and discussions relating to the problems of this human life. All that is involved in the labor question, the temperance question, the interests and duties of citizens and their relations to society and the State ; in short, every-

thing in which the people need enlightenment, direction, sympathy, and encouragement should be made the subject of this Sunday work, and the talent and good-will of the people capable of contributing to it, should be enlisted and turned into it so far as possible. Sunday would become a great day, with all the appliances that wealth, leisure, education, talent, and philanthropic effort could supply directed to making it a Sabbath, for it would be a Christian Sabbath, or rest-day, in the highest sense.

"The good church people seem to be grieved at the way in which a large portion of the people do actually spend their Sundays. These not only seek such diversions as are open to them, and in summer time indulge in excursions and picnics, but they are apt to fall into unseemly revelry and disorder. Some of them are too ready for the mischief which Satan finds for idle hands to do, and more of them spend their time in mere loafing and drinking. Shutting them out from a rational and improving employment of their time does not drive

them to church and Sunday-school. The driving-process for making people do better is never successful. But they are driven back upon their own resources, which are not very good. Saloon-keepers are ready enough with their hospitable side doors to help them pass the time and spend their earnings. It is the intolerant spirit of the Sabbatarians that is largely responsible for the worst uses to which Sunday is put, because they object to better uses, and stand in the way of their adoption, except those which they themselves prescribe, and those a great part of the people will not have. The best way to keep people out of saloons and evil resorts and induce them to abstain from deviltry on the Lord's day, is to give them better places to go to and better things to do, to which they will be attracted. It would not change human nature and regenerate society all at once, but it would set wholesome influences at work, the effect of which would soon be visible and would increase very fast."

Tom Benedict had been showing un-

easiness for some time as the Judge set forth these heretical views, and at the first decided pause ventured to suggest that the church view of Sunday observance was not a matter of mere human prescription. He regarded it as a matter of divine ordinance and command, not to be lightly set aside by Christians on the ground of social expediency.

"I cannot see," replied the Judge, "why we should not take a sensible view of what Divine command is and from what it is to be derived. I do not admit that your church view of Sunday is a Christian view, in the sense that it was sanctioned by Christ's teachings. I think the very contrary. It is rather a revival in modern times of the Hebrew idea, for which the English Puritans were largely responsible. It was a part of the dismal repression which they infused into religion, and it is singular how far they forced their spirit upon English and American Protestantism. Why on earth should we in this age of the world model our day of rest on the Jewish Sabbath of three or four thousand years

ago? Why insist even that the Christian Sunday is the same thing as the Mosaic seventh day?

"I have a great deal of admiration for Moses, but he did his work a long time ago, and he did it for the people under his charge, in conditions that ceased to exist ages ago. He had some conceptions which, like those of other great men, are good for all time, but he was not making laws and ordinances for Europe and America in the nineteenth century of the Christian era, of which he had no conception whatever. The genius of Moses appears in nothing so remarkably, as in the largeness of mind with which he appropriated the noblest conceptions of earlier 'seekers after God' for the use of his own people. Men had long before found out that it was evil to steal, to murder, to commit adultery, etc.; Moses formulated it into simple law. The Chaldæans, two thousand years before, observed every seventh day, as what they called *Sabbattu*—'a day of rest for the soul'; Moses proclaimed its observance as a duty to Jehovah.

"He had a very difficult undertaking, had Moses, in rescuing a horde of ignorant slaves from Egyptian bondage and establishing them in their promised land as a great nation. It was one of the great exploits of early history, for I assume that it was in its main substance a historical event, as truly as the siege of Troy, however much of the marvellous and the mythical there may be in the accounts of it, as in accounts of all great events of the early history of mankind. It was a time of superstition, of signs and wonders, and of religions even the best of which were Paganism, according to any modern view. Moses could never by his personal authority have kept that people in subjection and carried out his mission. The Hebrews had their conception of a deity, like other peoples of the time, and it was undoubtedly a high conception for those days, and Moses developed and magnified it to very good effect, and the annalists of his achievements doubtless did it a good deal more. But the Deity of Moses was strictly the God of the Hebrews and of nobody else, and with the

tendency to gross idolatry all about them it required a good deal of impressive demonstration to keep them obedient and loyal to him. He was their ruler and their King, and he must be regarded with awe in order to be obeyed. Theocracy was natural to the time and people, and furnished to Moses just the agency he required for his great mission. It was one of the striking and notable developments of early human history, and its influence, like that of so many other striking developments, is felt yet.

"But, after all, the laws and ordinances laid down by Moses were for the children of Israel in the situation in which he had to deal with them. The worship and observances which he prescribed were proper to the Supreme Deity—'the Highest,' as the Chaldæan Abraham called Him, in comparison with the multitude of 'other gods'—as Moses and the Israelites conceived Him, and the rules and rites were intended very largely to restrain the people from idolatry, from straying after the gods of other people, and to induce subjection and obedience.

One of the methods of holding the minds of the people in subjection to Jehovah and to his servant, Moses, was the entire devotion of one day in seven to his worship and the sacrifices of the priests and the rest from all ordinary occupations. But even the Hebrew Sabbath was pharisaically distorted by the Puritans, as it had been by the most religious classes in the time of Jesus, and as it is now. The early Jews not only worshipped Jehovah and studied his law on the Sabbath, but they marked the day by better clothes, finer food and genial, kindly social enjoyment. One of the notable things in the history of Jesus is the number of dinners and suppers and feasts he went to 'on the Sabbath day.' And even he was never accused of breaking the Sabbath for that. Any one who does not confine his attention to the Ten Commandments, but studies the account of all the Mosaic lawgiving cannot fail to see how human it all was, and how in keeping with the character and situation of the people. Its practical purpose is plain enough.

"With the theocratic nature of the government established for the tribes, in anticipation of their settlement in the land of their fathers, it was perfectly natural that we should have 'The Lord said unto Moses' or 'The Lord spake unto Moses, saying,' or 'Thus saith the Lord,' instead of 'Be it enacted,' or 'It is decreed by Moses.' Moses felt himself possessed by 'the Spirit of the Lord' and he thundered it forth; and was listened to. Now, I believe in having one day in seven set apart and consecrated for the people of our day and generation, adapted to their conditions and needs, and calculated to elevate their lives and characters, without regard to what may have been most necessary and fitting for the children of Israel forty centuries ago, when they had just emerged from a long slavery and were about to set out on a great history as an independent people in the Land of Canaan."

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"The Judge seems to be a good deal of a free-thinker," I observed to Tom, as

we came out into the night, which was rather dreary.

"Yes," was the reply, "he is an absolute free-thinker about everything. I only wish I was enough of a student and of a talker to answer him, for I know there are answers to his views that are very convincing. But he is too much for me, and I should only get demolished if I undertook to reply to him, for he has a vast deal of learning on the subject at command, which I am not familiar with."

"Perhaps if you were, you would be still less inclined to tackle him," I remarked, and left Tom at his corner to pursue his own cogitations, while I sought my couch with supreme unconcern as to the outcome of the controversy.

## V.

### THE JUDGE DISCOURSES AT LARGE ON RELIGION.

THE "Owls" gathered again the next Saturday night in the inmost recesses of the Asphodel grottoes and I was on hand early—that is, considerably before twelve o'clock had struck. I anticipated a resumption of the Sunday talk, or at least some sort of a sequel to it, and I was not disappointed. The Judge's remarks about Sunday observance and the attitude of the churches were uppermost in the minds of those present, and it did not take long to open up the subject again. Tom's mind being the most anxious, he was the first to set the Judge going.

"I am afraid you are not altogether in sympathy with the Christianity of the day," he said rather uneasily, addressing himself to the Mentor of his youth and

manhood, "judging from your talk a week ago."

"Well, I do not quite like to say I am not in sympathy with it, for I am a believer in the necessity and the benefit of religion for mankind, and the present Christianity is the best we have now; but I do feel that the Church has failed to adapt itself in recent years to the progress of ideas, that it has got out of sympathy with the spirit of the time, has largely lost its hold upon the people, and is not doing anything like the good it might do. I want to see it revise its Constitution, so to speak, and adjust itself to the conditions and needs of the present day. I would not on any account be numbered among the assailants of religion or the assailants of Christianity. It seems to me just as senseless as assailing government or assailing republicanism because principles become distorted and misapplied and methods of administration are subject to abuses. People need religion, and are better for it, but, like everything pertaining to human life, it is a matter of de-

velopment and adaptation to changing character and needs.

"Why, you can hardly pretend to think that, while people cling so to the sacredness of the Hebrew Scriptures, they really believe in the cosmogony of Genesis, the mythology of Moses, and the Israelite conception of God, or regard the annals and chronicles of the Jewish dynasties and struggles, full of imperfections and inconsistencies as they are, as a record 'inspired' in any such sense as to imply that it is infallibly correct? It seems strange to me that people should continue to discuss the matter seriously and give the opponents of their religion such a vantage-ground of attack. The fact is that people do not believe these things, however they may acquiesce in traditions that the Church has not given up for fear of disastrous consequences that would never come. But why attack Moses and his laws and denounce the God of Israel and the manner of worshipping Him? It was all a very wonderful development for its time, far above anything then existing, at least in

the same part of the world, and it raise
the Jewish nation immensely. It wa
the first great development of huma
genius applied to religion, and the wo
der is not that the conception of Go
and of worship was so gross and materia
but that it was not more so.

"Jehovah, the Deity of a race, of a p
culiar people, with his 'jealousy,' his ter
ble power, his fierce anger, and his love
sacrifices and burnt offerings, is, accordin
to modern ideas, a heathen conceptio
and his worship was a kind of paganism
But it was a far more exalted conceptio
than that of the tribes that surrounde
the Hebrews, and the worship was r
ligion pure and undefiled compared t
theirs. I regard Jehovah and his wo
ship and his government as a productio
of the religious genius of the Hebrew
and not as a Divine revelation to th
human race, except so far as all manife
tations of humanity may be so regarde
Even as a revelation, it must be judge
by higher and better ones,—such as a
pear in the later Hebrew Scriptures then
selves. But the system was an outgrowt

of the character and wants of the people, and was a great help to their progress until they at last failed to adapt it to their advancement, allowed it to fossilize, and then they fell away from all vital religion. Now, Jews and Christians both keep up the pretence of sanctifying the fossils.

"It is not at all to be wondered at that the early efforts of the Jews to account for the origin of the world and the human race should be crude and fabulous, like those of all other ancient peoples. The wonder is that people with brains at this age of the world should persist in trying to regard them as anything else and to reconcile them with science. It is not at all strange that the account of Moses's dealings with the children of Israel should contain so much of the mythical and the miraculous. The conception of God as their Ruler came naturally to them, and the character he assumed in that conception was one adapted to their comprehension and calculated to secure obedience to the leaders through whom his commands

came to them. That all commands and laws and ordinances should be put in form as emanating directly from the invisible Ruler was natural,—even necessary; and the worship devised was calculated to impress the people and make them submissive. But what man of sense can really study these things without seeing their peculiar fitness for their time and place, and their incongruity with the present state of the world? It needs no learning, only common sense. You must have noticed how purely a matter of this world it all was. The offences and penalties, some of them characteristic only of barbarism, had to do with material things alone. All promises and menaces related to the well-being—the worldly, material well-being—of that particular people in the land which was given them. There is nothing spiritual in the motives and ends inculcated. There was no conception of immortality or of any other life than this, and no regard for any other people but the children of Israel.

"What I am driving at in all this is

the idea that in all times religion has been a matter of development—of evolution, if you please—just as government has been; that it has been the production of the genius of the peoples, springing from their highest conception of Deity, human duty, and human destiny; has found form and expression through their prophets and leaders, and has been adapted from time to time to their needs, or else has lost its hold and left them to lapse into irreligion."

"But you do not deny that there was much of permanent value in the religion of the ancient Hebrews," suggested Benedict.

"Why, of course not. One generation or one age does not improvidently throw away the fruits of the experience of those that have gone before it. There is much of permanent value in the experience and teachings of all ancient peoples who were not in abject barbarism. We do not regard the writings of Plato and the sayings of Socrates as 'sacred' because they contained wisdom of permanent value to the human race,

nor do we hesitate to reject what later experience and thought concludes to be worthless for us. Our conception of the age of the world is apt to get inverted. The world was not old in those ancient days, but young. It is older now than it ever was before, and the human race has had more experience. In fact, it has advanced more in knowledge and achievement and in thought in the last fifty years than it has sometimes done in ten times that period. Progress is made by holding to the wisdom of one age, sifting it from the chaff in which it is more or less enveloped, and adding to it. Progress is hindered by assuming that on some subject of vital concern the last word was spoken ages ago, or that the word then spoken is not to be disputed or enquired into. Men must advance in their religion as in other things, or it will cease to fit the human race and to help it onward and upward."

"But," queried Benedict, "did not the advent of Christianity make a great change, doing away with the dead forms of Hebrew worship, replacing with living

principles the detailed mandates of the old law, and modifying the Hebrew conceptions of divinity?"

"Precisely that. It relegated the old system to the limbo of dead mythologies, and made its records a history and a literature, interesting for study and useful for instruction more or less. Why not admit and accept this, instead of insisting that certain books of the Hebrew people were the inspired word of God and not to be really studied and criticised, simply because a convocation of priests some centuries after Christ made 'Holy Scripture' of them, deciding which were inspired and which were not. Science, including that of historical criticism, will be accepted by the best minds and by common sense, and it is useless to fight against it; although based on material facts, it changes and grows with an advancing knowledge of the facts. So Christianity has been a matter of growth and adaptation in the past, and must be in the future if it is to retain its power for good. The life and teachings of Jesus were its foundation, and I

see no prospect of an improvement upon those, rightly interpreted and applied; but Jesus founded no church, organized no system, formulated no creeds. That has been the work of others, and it has undergone much transformation since the days of the Fathers of the church. The Christianity of the Middle Ages was not that of the Fathers, and the Christianity of to-day is not that of the Middle Ages.

"The trouble with the Church now is that human progress during the present century has been very rapid and very great, in scientific knowledge, in historical knowledge, in all manner of intellectual development and achievement, and even in moral conception, and the Church has not kept up with it. The Church seems to have ceased to examine all things and to hold fast that which is good, but rather to persist in holding fast that which is traditional and conventional. If Christianity is to take possession of mankind again, it must accept what mankind has learned, take in the results of man's experience, and adapt

its methods to living conditions and needs.

"What do we see now? Acquiescence in certain man-made and unyielding creeds by intelligent, well-meaning men, because it is socially respectable, morally inspiring perhaps for them personally (though that is subject to doubt), a good thing, they think, for their families and a means of doing something in a perfunctory way for charity; a general rejection of these old forms, creeds and systems of belief by scholars and students and earnest thinkers,—those I mean who think with their brains and accept the conclusions of thought, and not those whose cerebrations are controlled by feeling and sentiment and who only imagine that they think; and the alienation of the great mass of the poor and the humble from the influence of religion. With all our outworn creeds and conflicting sects we have little vital Christianity in these days, and, as I said before, the sheep are wandering without a shepherd."

"But you do not suppose," interjected the anxious Thomas, "that the mass of

unlettered people understand the results of historical criticism to which you have referred, that they appreciate the conclusions of science, or that they are capable of being restrained and guided by mere moral principles, philosophically inculcated!"

"I believe that the unlettered people, as you call them, can be better restrained and guided by accepting facts and the conclusions of reason, by admitting the truth that can be justified and defended to their common sense, than by clinging to errors and delusions which make it necessary to appeal to superstition. The wisdom of the age is not confined to the learned. The results of science and the conclusions of philosophic study get abroad and permeate the common mind —they are 'in the air,' as the saying is. There is a receptive instinct among the people which makes them, in general, capable of learning what the highest minds are capable of teaching, and somehow the essence of it gets to them through the universal contact that is characteristic of the time. The minds of the unlettered are not so far removed

from those of the lettered but that a common spirit in matters of belief and unbelief pervades them. There are acute and penetrating minds, addicted to reading and thinking and talking, even among the 'common people,' and ideas spread when they are of the kind that the mental atmosphere is prepared to carry and the mental soil ready to receive.

"I knew an old Scotch weaver once, who, for general information and reading and the power to digest and assimilate what he acquired and to communicate it to others, was the superior of any man I know in this club. I tell you the days of superstition have gone by, and the age of common sense has come and must be accepted."

"I can't say that I like this glorifying of common sense," said Benedict with a little sigh of impatience. "I think there are better things than common sense in human nature. There are feelings and sentiments that may be true, as well as opinions; there is a spiritual side to our nature as well as a practical side. I like the expression 'horse sense,' because it

sets that down to the animal category, in the sphere of oats and hay and other material things, where it belongs. Spiritual faith may be as true in its conclusions as 'horse sense,' and I think it is infinitely higher."

"O, yes; that may be, but they deal with different orders of things in the same great universe and they must somehow be consistent. I do not see why a man who looks straight out of his eyes with a clear vision for all that comes within his view is not just as capable of lofty sentiment and high spiritual conception as the one that insists on looking through distorted lenses or colored glass. I take common sense as simply the faculty of seeing and judging things according to what knowledge and reason dictate, instead of being deluded by imagination and controlled by fear and hope. The great intellect of the time is not different, except in degree, from the ordinary intelligence of the time. It reaches farther but in the same direction, and wherever it opens the way the other eagerly presses in. Its tension is that way.

"In days when knowledge was scant and the means of knowledge slight, when reason was ill-armed and overborne, when superstition was rampant and men's passions and feelings mightier than their minds, religion was adapted to the existing conditions and had to be or die. In a time of wider and clearer knowledge, of universal education and prevailing common sense, if you will excuse the term, religion must be readjusted or lose its vitality. You remember the chapter in 'Notre Dame de Paris,' headed 'Ceci tuera cela,' 'this' referring to the printing press, and 'that' to the Church. The printing press has killed the Church of Louis XI.'s time, and will kill any church that is based on superstition. I want to see the Church save itself, for it cannot be spared. I want to see it a power for the salvation of the human race from the tendencies of degeneration and for its elevation and improvement."

"Well, what would you have it do?" queried Thomas, the believer. "What is the basis of your new reformation?"

"I would have it discard the require-

ment of a belief in the miraculous and all which that implies and all that depends upon it."

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Tom looked as though lightning had struck just behind his chair, and the party broke up more quietly than usual, though I noticed Colonel Bloodgood indulged in a deep chuckle that made his face redder and his eyes bluer than ever.

## VI.

THE JUDGE GETS DIVERTED TO A DISCOURSE UPON POLITICAL IMMORALITY.

ONE Saturday I met my friend Benedict, as I did frequently, for the purpose of going to the Asphodel with him for the midnight meeting. For the first time he seemed doubtful about going. In answer to my expression of surprise he said:

"These religious discussions that we have been drifting into are not altogether pleasant to me. I am satisfied with such faith as I have and strongly attached to my religious associations, and why should I have them disturbed?"

"Well, well," I replied, "your faith can't be very strong or very well founded if it will not stand discussion between friends; and I see nothing to disturb your associations, unless you are ready to admit that they are based upon illusions

or delusions, and in that case I should think you would be glad to find some better foundation for them."

"Perhaps it would prove only a less comfortable delusion and leave a fellow in a more unstable frame of mind," was the reply. "I am no reformer and have no liking for breaking things up. I never knew before that the Judge was so radical in his views. I knew he was what is called 'liberal' in everything and that he belonged to no church, but he has always been rather reticent on religious matters when I have seen him. His daughter belongs to the Episcopal church, I think. At least she goes there and takes part in charitable work, and he often goes with her and contributes quite liberally to all causes that he approves of, though I know he draws the line at foreign missions and maintains that we have enough to do nearer home, and that the heathen most in need of our help are at our own doors."

"O, well," said I, "the Judge is all right. He is not seeking to disturb anybody's faith, but only wants it to have a

more solid basis. However, something else may come up to-night which you would be sorry to miss," and so Tom went along with some evident reluctance.

We found the Judge and Colonel Bloodgood seated quietly together, and apparently talking politics in the most friendly manner. Contrary to my usual custom of non-intervention, I remarked that politics was rather out of season as a subject of discussion or even of conversation.

"The only time I talk politics is when it is out of season," remarked the Judge. "People are so unreasonable, not to say irrational, in their politics that it sometimes makes me doubt whether I am not premature in my confidence that the time has come for the rule of reason in other things. Still, I do not give up my confidence that the kingdom of common sense is at hand."

Tom visibly winced at this and seemed to fear the direction the talk might take, and I felt called upon to violate my principle of neutrality and silence once more

by asking the Judge if he did not think that the verdict of the people was generally about right in this country.

"I can't say that I think it is always right, by any means, and 'generally about right' does not mean much. You see, I do not consider one political party as altogether right and the other altogether wrong, or even that the two are so very far apart in the matter of right and wrong; so it is easy to say, whichever way the election goes, the decision of the people is 'perhaps about right.' If it had gone the other way, the remark would have been just as applicable—possibly more so. I have an abiding confidence that in the long run decisions of the people, or 'verdicts' of the people, to accept the common phrase, will be on the whole nearer right than decisions by any other power would be, and that it is safer to trust to them. The people will give themselves as good government and as sound public policy as they are ready for, and it is better for them to work out their problems than for any superior order of persons to impose solutions upon

them, even if the superior order were admitted to exist or could be got into the position of governing for us. I certainly do not think that our more intelligent, better educated, and wealthier class would give us better government or any sounder policy if the political power were exclusively in their hands. On the contrary, the great mass of the people—the 'lower classes' if you choose to call them so—being possessed of political power, is just what saves us from an oppressive domination of selfishness and greed.

"What I deplore most is the extreme party spirit that seems at all times to be latent among our people, and which breaks into fierce extremes whenever there is political excitement. That is when people seem to me to be so irrational that I take no satisfaction in talking politics. Most partisans are grossly unfair to their opponents and capable of saying the meanest things about them, unless they happen to know them personally, when they may admit that they are decent human beings in everything but their political views. These violent

partisans—in time of political excitement they are deplorably numerous—talk and act as if they believed one half of the people of the country were trying to ruin its prosperity, if not to subvert its institutions, whereas one half is exactly as patriotic as the other, differing only in their opinions as to the best policy for promoting the welfare of the nation. Sometimes even this difference of opinion is almost imaginary, and the party spirit springs chiefly from the contest between two organizations for control, though persons possessed with it convince themselves that they are inspired by lofty principles and patriotic purposes. Really, they are simply in a temper of 'fight' for the victory of their side, like the participants in a mighty match of strength and skill. They are blinded to every consideration but that of party success. In one of our violent political contests, where an issue of principle is actually involved, very few persons have really any intelligent attachment for the principle. They show in their talk that they do not half understand it, and many of those who do

understand it do not really believe in it as stated and contended for by their party. If the same party had been led to declare for the very opposite principle these rank partisans would have shouted just as loudly in support of its position and followed its leaders just as zealously.

"The vital questions in our politics nowadays are merely commercial and industrial, relating to material well-being, and the concern of the mass of the people in regard to them is precisely the same for all; and this makes intense and intolerant party spirit seem more inscrutable. Of course, memories and traditions of the past and inherited or derived prejudices have much to do with it, but there seems to be an inherent tendency in human nature to choose sides and get up a fight. Once a man has taken his position, the cause in which he is enlisted is righteous altogether; the Lord of Hosts is on its side and the salvation of mankind depends on its success. It is fortunate that there are some sober brains in all ranks, which refuse to be upset or

carried away by this fiery breeze of passion. It is said that the majority rules in this country. But in normal conditions it is a minority, and not a very large one either, that in every contest tips the scale and decides which party shall be trusted with power.

"The political forces are in reality four, and not two. There are the two partisan masses forever pitted against each other and striving for the mastery. Then there are the indifferent, the venal, the scum and driftwood of politics that can be gathered in by one side or the other or divided between them by various sordid inducements. Finally, there are the thinking, cool-headed and conscientious citizens, who refuse to see the good all on one side and the bad all on the other; who decline to take their knowledge from stump speakers and their principles from conventions of delegates most of whom have no principles and want none; citizens whose object is not party success and offices for one set of selfish men rather than another, but the adoption of sound and safe

methods and the promotion of policies that will produce real benefits. This particular 'element' pervades all ranks, and rarely attempts to organize itself. It cannot be crushed because it cannot be hit. It cannot be bought or wheedled or frightened or dragooned to one side or the other. Our safety is in this element of health, this antidote for virulent partisanship, this antagonist of the corrupt and venal force.

"One of the highest evidences of the patriotic foresight of Washington is his warning to the country on the subject of party spirit. But I think one of its worst and most insidious effects could not have been foreseen by him, and that is its production of immorality in politics. Men condone or excuse or connive at practices in politics by which their own party gains advantage, which in private and personal affairs they would regard as infamous. They seem to look with actual complacency, if not with positive satisfaction, upon insincere professions, false pretences, and tricks worthy of sharpers. Bribery and corruption

do not startle them, if it is their own party that gains by it. Trafficking in the suffrage for the benefit of this candidate or that seems to be justified to the seared consciences of otherwise decent men by the fact that there is gain in it for the party which they profess to believe is in the right. It is rather discouraging to notice how little sense of real shame is produced by the exposure of corrupt practices in politics, and how vague and perfunctory is the condemnation of them. Men engaged in them or more or less directly responsible for them are scarcely put out of countenance by exposure, and lose no caste in their party. In fact there is a disposition to use all the powerful influences of the party to shield them from any other unpleasant consequences than the criticism of their opponents, for which they care little because it comes from their opponents and does not represent a general sentiment of real condemnation. Why, men who prostitute official power, which should be exercised only for public ends, to promote their personal or

partisan designs boldly pose as patriots of exceptional virtue and nobody laughs or turns away in disgust; men who use money boldly and lavishly to buy votes or to carry elections by knavish methods are held up in their own party as moral and religious teachers of great merit instead of canting hypocrites, and expect to get public rewards for their sacrifices and expenditures, not in behalf of the public good, but of party success. The pulpit is absolutely silent about political abuses and corruption, though they are about the most demoralizing evils of the day, because ministers and deacons, and pillars of the Church are as much besotted with this blind party spirit as anybody.

"The whole trouble comes from this intense party spirit, for with men of fair intelligence, moderate education, and average honesty it really confounds the public good with party success. Most of these men actually believe, in the excitement of a canvass, that the welfare of the country depends upon the success of their party, and that the triumph of their

opponents would bring, if not the ruin and disaster that they predict, at least serious injuries to the public weal. So they countenance lies and false pretences, contemptible tricks and devices for influencing ignorant and unreasoning voters, even the corrupt use of money and of public trusts, provided they believe that their party really gains by such means. Of course there are party men who deplore these things and would gladly put an end to them, and there are others who use them without the least scruple, because they expect personally to gain by them and are never troubled by qualms of conscience. But the great body of partisans without whose acquiescence these evils could not exist, are so convinced that the ascendency of their party is essential to the well-being of the Republic that they are inclined, if not to justify, at least to connive at any means which the leaders and managers find necessary or effective for its maintenance. Their moral sensibilities are blunted by party spirit."

"But don't you think, Judge, that it

does make a difference what party is in control?" asked Benedict.

"Make a difference? Certainly it makes a difference, and there have been times when it made a very serious difference: but at such times there was no need of these evil methods and corrupt practices; the difference itself determined the action of the people. But there never could be a difference that would justify the discarding of moral principle, throwing common honesty and decency overboard, and disregarding all standards of right and wrong in human conduct, and in these days the difference is not such a very serious matter anyway. The Colonel here, who is an old-fashioned Democrat, though always a patriot to the core, will probably admit that nothing very disastrous will come from the defeat of his party at the last election."

"O, I've got used to it," ejaculated the Colonel; "but I do believe that even if disaster is avoided a great good will be postponed."

"And you, Tom, I suspect," resumed

the Judge, "would have been ready to admit that no serious harm had been done, if the Colonel's party had staid in power, though you are disposed to believe that all political wisdom and virtue is on the other side. Well, then, what excuse is there for this intense party spirit which is not willing to be restricted by the bonds of the moral standard insisted upon in everything but politics? I make no distinction of parties in this matter. Aside from questions of immediate motives, opportunities, and means, they are alike in the use of unrighteous methods. The seat of the evil is in a debauched public sentiment and a seared public conscience, and party spirit is the cause of both. Political immorality is a crying evil, and one that menaces free institutions more than any other, if not more than all others. It exists in administration, in legislation, in party management, and in popular political action. All the moral and religious teachers in pulpit and press and on every platform of instruction ought to be stirred up against it."

"Quite a Jeremiad," I remarked to Tom as we set out homeward.

"Yes, and there is ground enough for it, I must say. The Judge is sound enough in his views on morality," was the reply in tones that might be taken as implying that there was some question about the soundness of his views on something else, —theology perhaps, or the relative merits of political parties.

## VII.

### SOME FREE DISCOURSE ON SUPERSTITION AND WORSHIP.

THE next Saturday night after the Judge's digression into politics, on sauntering into the club after the theatre I was surprised to find Tom Benedict already on hand, as if eager for a renewal of the disquieting discussion which had been interrupted, and which I felt sure would be resumed.

"Hello!" I ejaculated, "I hardly expected to see you here to-night. I suspect the Judge is likely to get back to the subject which seemed to rasp your orthodox sensibilities a couple of weeks ago."

"O, pshaw!" was the astonishing reply; "you don't suppose I am so weak in the faith that I can't stand candid discussion! In fact, I have been getting anxious to hear how he was going to justify the ground he took, and had made

up my mind to bring up the subject myself if he didn't."

It is curious how minds accustomed to association get to running in the same track. Without any special reason I felt sure that our mentor would return to the subject that he opened to view in declaring that the Christian Church ought to give up the long-cherished belief in miracles. It was too startling an announcement to be left in the air, as it were. It was evident that Tom also had anticipated a return to the subject and had given much more thought to it than I had. His apparent aversion seemed to have given way to a sort of anxiety to have it out. And when we got together in our inner sanctum, it speedily appeared that the Judge had divined the state of mind through which his young friend had been passing, and had come with a full purpose to justify the ground he had taken for the relief, if possible, of the anxious soul of the devout Thomas.

When we were settled in our easy chairs around the small table and before Tom had any occasion to carry out his

resolve to bring up the subject himself, the Judge, with a benignant glance at him, but addressing his words directly to the Colonel, who probably had not given the matter a thought, said rather abruptly:

"There is nothing I deprecate more than mere attacks upon the faith and the religious sensibilities of people. There is nothing in human discussion that I dislike so much as the ranting infidelity that coarsely and bluntly assails the Christian Church and the records of religious development, and attributes to them the iniquities in human history with which they have been associated. Religious sentiment and aspiration is, after all, the chief thing that marks the distinction between men and brutes. It is the mightiest means by which men are elevated and kept up, and through it the progress of the race has made its way. But, like everything else, it is a subject of development and adaptation to conditions—of an orderly evolution. Conceptions of the Deity change from age to age, and no matter what the

preachers say, ours are vastly different from those of Moses and the prophets. Ideas about worship change, too, in accordance with the knowledge and intellectual habits of the time. What I complain of is that Christianity, which, so far as its fundamental principles go, can be adapted to any new condition, should be so bound to traditions and the conceptions of rude ages, and should be dragging to the rearward of human progress instead of helping to lead it. For the result is that it loses its hold, not only upon thinking people, but upon the mass, which instinctively imbibes the conclusions of modern knowledge and reason, and it sacrifices its power to lead and raise mankind. It is not holding the forces of society in restraint and giving them effective guidance, as it might be doing."

"But do you think religious belief and worship and all that sort of thing necessary to reasonable beings at all?" cynically inquired the un-pious and non-religious Colonel.

"Certainly I do," was the prompt

answer. "There may be a question of the form and manner of belief and worship, but I cannot conceive of a state of man so reasonable that he would not find some form and manner a necessity of his nature. You and I, Colonel, may fancy that we are so rational that we can always do right by ourselves and others out of mere prudence and good sense, but I imagine that in some of the vicissitudes of life we might find help toward high conduct and demeanor in the recognition of a beneficent Power in the universe and through the feelings that find expression in the worship of such a Power. I believe a morally and intellectually perfect human being would be a very devout person, as the mere result of perfection, and devotion helps imperfect people to become better, or, at the very least, to resist becoming any worse. O, you know perfectly well that, taking the whole community together, the praying, church-going people are morally and socially the 'better element.' What I want is to see a prevailing religious teaching and worship that recognizes all that

science teaches and all that reason dictates, and can consequently resume the leadership of the human race, which the Church of to-day has substantially lost.

"But all this is mere rambling. My great point is that absolutely all belief in what is called 'miraculous' should be given up. Then the rest would follow; for that involves much."

"But," interposed Tom in almost breathless agitation, "surely religion assumes the supernatural and depends upon it. You wouldn't give that up?"

"Well, that depends on what you call 'supernatural.' *Natural* is extensive enough for me. The God of the universe must be the most natural of all things, the essence of which all nature is the embodiment—nature, terrestrial and celestial. Nature that is seen and can be studied must of necessity be consistent with that which is unseen and can only be vaguely comprehended, but comprehended the more clearly as we understand better the revelation that comes within our mental range. I take the world and man to be our only real revelation.

Stick to 'supernatural' as a word of distinction if you will, but get rid of superstition. The world is outgrowing it. Religion used to be full of it because the world was full of it, and nearly all men's minds were subject to it. Now, knowledge and reason and prevailing common sense are driving it out, and religion must give it up or be laughed at; and when the augurs cannot meet without laughing their system is doomed. It must be given up because reason demands it; and it may be given up because religion does not need it.

"I cannot see why we should not regard reports of miracles two thousand years ago or four thousand years ago just as we regard them now, or why reported miracles in one country and among one ancient people should not be treated just as they are when they appear in the records of some other country or people. I do not believe that the law and order of nature have changed since human records began, or that the Supreme Power of the universe has undergone a revolution in methods in the brief

space of six thousand years, more or less. Why should I accept miraculous tales about Abraham or Moses or Joshua or Jonah, because they are found in Hebrew records, when I reject precisely analogous ones with which other ancient records are filled, merely because there is a sort of lineal descent of the religion we have inherited from that which finds its exposition and embodiment in Hebrew literature? That is not reason enough for me. The Buddhist and the Mohammedan have a precisely analogous reason for believing in the miracles of their religions; so had the civilized pagans of Greece and Rome and Persia and Egypt, but we do not admit the sufficiency of the reason in their cases.

"Superstition has not wholly fled from the earth yet. There are people in Africa and the South Sea Islands who are behind the Israelites and Egyptians of Moses's day, and they are still having miracles. Even in civilized countries and right among ourselves we hear of miraculous and supernatural things every now and then, but we do not believe in them,

and those who do are regarded as either particularly ignorant or as fanatical and deluded. There is plenty of literature nowadays containing accounts of miracles, but it finds little acceptance. The records of the Middle Ages are full of accounts of such marvels in and out of the Christian Church, because that was a time of ignorance and superstition. They were readily accepted and the stories became easily current without conscious fraud. How many fictitious tales go about even now relating to mere ordinary affairs and are accepted as true? Miracles and supernatural doings are the common-places of ancient records, even of some that have the soberest historical purpose. Greek and Roman literature is stuffed with them and Oriental literatures are largely made up of them. It was hardly possible for any great event to happen or any great character to figure in the world two thousand years ago or more, or even one thousand years ago, without giving rise to accounts of miraculous occurrences which were generally believed.

"Now, I should like to know why we are to cast away all other miracles and supernatural happenings as unworthy of belief and cling to those that appear in the records of the ancient Hebrews—some of them religious and some not—and in the early records of Christianity. The same critical processes apply to all ancient records, and have been applied, and they produce the same results as to what is credible and incredible in their contents. Whatever plea is put in as to a special sanction for certain of these records, the obstinate fact remains that the progress of human knowledge and human reason has broken the hold of a belief in miracles on the minds of intelligent men and even of those not so very intelligent, and they cannot be guided and controlled through any such belief. Something more potent and consistent with the hard common sense that prevails must take its place. I do not believe that common sense and the truest spiritual sense are or can be antagonistic.

"The Roman Catholic Church is more consistent in this matter than the Protes-

tant churches. It is based avowedly on superstition, though it would not accept that as the right word, and there may be enough of superstition in the world to sustain the fabric for a long time yet. The Catholic priesthood maintains that miracles and special divine revelations do occur now, as they always have occurred; but it has the prudence not to countenance a study of the 'sacred' records by the laity, and it is generally admitted, except by itself, to be opposed to the progress of knowledge and of ideas. But there is not superstition enough left for the Catholic Church and a lot of Protestant denominations, too. The differences among the latter all have their root in the superstitions of the past, for when men believe in things that will not bear the test of knowledge and reason they begin at once to differ and divide, because there is no common standard of judgment. The superstitious and unreasoning are capable of believing anything, and the direction their faith will take all depends on the idiosyncrasies of some powerful teacher or leader among them. Don't

you suppose that the Buddhists and the Mohammedans are just as earnest and just as thoroughly convinced that theirs is the only true religion, as ever the devotees of a Christian sect were?

"I denounce no man's religion, either of the present or the past. It may be the best of which he is capable and better for him than none. The religion of a man will partake of his character, that of a people will be shaped by its character, that of a time will be determined by the prevailing spirit. But the world has been advancing rapidly in the last fifty years, and the Church has not kept up. It is anchored to the past, loaded with traditions, water-logged with superstition. What is the result? Some emotional, earnest believers, largely women and young persons; many half-believers, including a large part of the clergy; more who acquiesce and conform, as the best thing to do in the interest of good behavior; and a vast and increasing crowd outside the pale altogether. Some of these latter are good enough and safe enough as citizens and members of the community,

but there are in the mass elements of danger. When the great body of unenlightened men cease to be held to a belief in a higher Power and a higher Judgment, you cannot guide them by mere counsels of worldly prudence and philosophy. Immediate self-interest and all manner of passions will carry them beyond bounds. The problem of self-government threatens to work into insoluble intricacies.

"I regard a restoration of the restraint and elevating influence of Christianity over society as necessary to the uplifting of mankind from their low condition, the salvation of free institutions and the system of popular government; and I regard as necessary to that restoration a casting out of inherited superstitions and the acceptance of the rule of reason, the adoption of every valid conclusion of science and rational criticism, the readjustment of the Church to the lines of modern progress in knowledge and thought, and a return to the original Christian principles of mutual consideration and helpfulness rather than a continuance in the

selfishness and greed of modern society.

"I am confident that this would conflict with nothing essential in the fundamental teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, and would not interfere with a rational worship and devotion, appealing to the sentiments and feelings of humanity in reverence for the Deity. Nay, more, I believe it thoroughly in harmony with the Divine fatherhood, the human brotherhood, which Jesus Christ proclaimed as the true ideal. I anticipate nothing permanent from 'new religions' got up by societies or liberal sects, however much nearer the truth they may be in some points than the historic Church. The Church is historic, the growth of time, the result of human development. It cannot be displaced but it may be reformed, as from time to time it has been; and now it needs reformation as never before. But the reform should come from within. To me personally it does not matter; I can maintain a belief alone and shape my course unaided by association. But society needs a great organization for the

restraint, inspiration, elevation, and guidance of its members; one which has vitality and vigor in it, which can command the service of the best minds and the most zealous natures, and that can reach and regenerate the wandering flocks that have no shepherds.

"It is a sad state of things when the ablest teachers of the prevailing religion doubt their own doctrines, and no longer preach them with conviction; when earnest believers are confined mainly to women and exceptionally emotional men; when sober citizens belong to the church because it is highly respectable, a good thing for their families and perhaps profitable for business and advantageous in social life, and not because they believe in its dogmas or have a vital interest in the real business of regenerating the race. Even the word 'dogma' has come to have rather an offensive sound, and doctrinal preaching is deprecated. Why? Because there is an unavowed recognition that the dogmas and doctrines are not such as to commend themselves any longer to the acceptance of reasonable

beings. They are calculated to repel and not to win.

"I say, Discard the belief in miracles, not because you and I cannot believe in them, not simply because historical investigation and scientific criticism discredit them, but because the civilization with which we have to deal has outgrown belief in them, and you cannot re-establish it. Doctrines based upon faith in them are no longer potent to restrain and guide men. If the Christian religion is to dominate the civilization of this and the coming generation, it must accept their intellectual conclusions, and base its system of faith upon these, or at least throw out what is irreconcilable with them. It is because I appreciate the great need of the power and influence of some religion, 'pure and undefiled,' to counteract the material and selfish tendencies that are always working for degradation, that I care about this.

"I used to say, Let every man believe or pretend to believe what he pleases, and let the Church pursue its own way, so long as I am at liberty to cherish my own

ideas and regulate my own conduct; but in all these recent discussions of labor troubles, political abuses, and social evils, it has seemed to me that the old foundations of the Moral Standard were broken up, and that it is in danger of being engulfed in confusion and lost sight of. A religious reformation is the great need of the time, and I am looking for a new Luther to be its herald."

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"Well, are you satisfied?" I asked of Tom as we wandered forth perhaps a little dazed.

"No, I am only confused," was the quiet reply, and Tom had no further word to say that night on any subject. He seemed to be thinking, all to himself.

## VIII.

### THE JUDGE OBJECTS TO MAKING A FETICH OF THE SCRIPTURES.

TOM had evidently been turning the matter over and trying to get out of the confusion of mind in which the Judge's last talk had left him. He seemed to feel that the discussion ought not to go on in this one-sided way, and though he had no great confidence in his own forensic powers, he had made up his mind that he would at least make a statement from his point of view. So when the Owls got together again, he made bold to express himself in the terms following, having apparently laid it all out in his mind, but finding it somewhat difficult to give full expression to his ideas:

"My dear Judge, I just want to state how I look at the matter we were talking about, or rather that you were talking

about, a week ago. You admit the necessity of some system of religious faith and the benefit of some form of worship. You must therefore accept the fundamental idea of a Creator of the universe having a direct relation to the human race and of a motive and sanction for conduct aside from mere worldly prudence. You must admit some destiny for human beings beyond the struggle for a tolerable existence here. Otherwise you cannot expect to replace, unless for the fortunate and philosophic few, mere selfish motives, looking to immediate satisfaction, with anything higher. Now, admitting any kind of dependence on a higher Power and a beneficent purpose on the part of that higher Power toward the human race, what is there unreasonable in supposing that the Almighty should work out a revelation of his will and purpose through human history, and why should not the record of that revelation be regarded as divine? In certain stages of human development what we call 'miracles' may have been necessary to impress the minds of men with belief in

the higher Power, and I see no reason why they may not have been used. It seems to me that there has run through history in ancient Judaism and in Christianity a current of divine revelation, and I cannot see why we should not regard the writings which contain a record of it as sacred, and in a certain sense inspired."

"Well," said the Judge, complacently, "the trouble with that theory is that it is not broad enough, and it will not stand the tests which conscientious students must apply to all past records, if they wish to understand them rightly. I do not believe in making a fetich of any writings whatever, or cramping the mind to fit any easy or comfortable explanation of things. I would set no limits to the efforts of the human mind to find out and to understand. I have no objection to a providential theory that will include the whole scheme of human history and its records. Here is the universe to-day, and here is man with his capacities and possibilities, and the history of his progress, and all we know or can know

about a higher Power is derived from a study of these and from our inner consciousness. But to my mind that is enough.

"I take the God of the universe, whatever human conception of him may be, as actually 'the same yesterday, to-day, and forever,' and the laws of development and progress under his stimulus and guidance to be unchanged and unchangeable. I object to taking the local deity of an ancient nomadic tribe as anything but possibly the highest conception of divinity existing at that time. If this deity differs little from those of other tribes at first, being supposed to reveal Himself in fire and cloud and storm, delighting in bloody sacrifices, subject to fierce outbreaks of anger and vengeance and fits of repentance and mercy, why should I regard it as the actual beginning of a God in which, in this day of enlightenment, I am to believe? God has not grown up with the human race; but the human conceptions of deity have. If a great leader of Israel raised the tribal conception of deity which he found among his people

to that of an unseen Ruler of a nation who was to make it great and prosperous, and derived from it laws, and statutes for the government of the people, used it to inspire patriotism and confidence, elevated its worship and purged it of the grossness of the earlier conception, what am I to see in that but evidence of progress in that race and of the genius of its first great leader?

"The God of Israel, to whose alleged commands authority is still attached, does not correspond to your conception of the Deity or mine, whatever you may try to think about it. With the ancient Hebrews, from the birth of their nation religion and politics were one, and worship was patriotism. Hence their genius, their statesmanship, and their philosophy were religious, and their teachers and prophets gradually developed and broadened the conception of the Deity, elevated his attributes, purified his worship, and extended his sway finally to all the nations of the earth, at the head of which Israel was to stand. Is this *God* gradually growing and developing,

or even gradually revealing himself, or is it a gradually developing *conception* of God, which is not finished yet? Have not others besides Hebrews contributed to lofty conceptions of the Divine Being in ancient times, and have not modern science, knowledge, and thought contributed more than all the ancients to a true idea of Deity? Make your 'Divine Providence' cover all peoples, all times, all the teachings of the past and present, and I do not object to your name for it. Extend your 'revelation' to all human experience and thought, and you may call it divine if you will. Accept all the wisdom of the ages as profitable for teaching, and you may say it is inspired for aught I care. And as for your sacred Scriptures, let their sacredness be determined by their character and usefulness to men and not by the canon of the priests of ages ago.

"It seems to me peculiarly absurd to keep up a superstitious reverence for that valuable and interesting and in many respects really noble and sublime collection of Hebrew literature known as

the Old Testament. How many really do preserve the traditional reverence for it, notwithstanding the pretence of the Church? Is it generally talked about and referred to now outside of the church doors with any particular reverence? How many people are shocked by jocose references to the Jonah story or the tale about Daniel in the lion's den or the circumstances of Adam's fall? Few even of devout people read, for their own devotion and edification, any but the ethical and poetical books, and those only in detachments and separate chapters, and there is not one in a thousand of moderately-educated people who have a systematic knowledge of the contents of the whole collection. A clergyman who would read the volume through in course before an intelligent congregation would upset half his creed before he got through. A prudent orthodox divine would not dare try the experiment. Why, there is not a more thoroughly human collection of ancient literature in existence, if you read it with your eyes open and your mind free from prej-

udice. It is mainly the attribution to Jehovah of every law and regulation, every plan and purpose of ruler and teacher, every appeal, threat and promise of reformer and prophet, that has imposed its authority so long. But that attribution was natural to the circumstances, after Moses established the theocratic idea and identified pride of race and national patriotism with worship of Jehovah.

"The writings of the really learned orthodox critics are very diverting to me, and quite as much calculated to impress the purely human character of the Jewish literature upon the mind as are the efforts of their free-thinking opponents, and it is curious that they are able to reconcile their own conclusions with the exclusive theory of Divine inspiration to which they cling. All searching criticism only confirms the common-sense view which an unbiased mind would naturally take if you could imagine it to come to the study of the Old Testament without preconceptions. I had what I consider the enormous advantage of escaping all religious teaching as a child and a youth,

though I had plenty of moral instruction, and I have been studying religion more or less in recent years as I would study any other phase of human development,—politics for instance.

"It is generally admitted now that what are called the books of Moses were largely made up ages after Moses's day, chiefly about the time of the restoration from Babylonian exile, out of old documents of various origin pieced out with traditions and fragments, and with original interpolations by the collators. It was rather clumsily done, too, the order of events being sometimes inverted or disjointed and inconsistent accounts being patched together with little effort at harmony. It showed more candor than skill, for your Jewish scribe did not seek literary finish or regard the rights of different authors. Aside from its evidently mythological character the account of the creation and the destruction of the human race by a great flood consists of a patchwork of two quite different legends, and its naïve assumption of the existence of other people than the Adam

family in the world at the start and of others than Noah's descendants after the Deluge is not to be swept aside as something that should not be questioned. The laborious efforts to explain these things, to reconcile them with science, and all that, are laughable. They need no explanation, and have nothing to do with science. They are natural enough as one of the many rude attempts of ancient peoples just beginning to study and to write, to account for the origin of things.

The world and the human race were to be accounted for, then the Hebrew race and the Jewish nation. There were analogous efforts and similar records among other ancient peoples. All such records are full of legends and marvels, and those of the Jews are rather exceptional in the lack of imagination and a poetic spirit; but why sacred or inspired? Neither is there anything strange in the tales of signs and wonders in connection with the bringing of the Israelites out of Egypt and establishing them in Canaan when we consider that the account was made up from imperfect records and

from legends and traditions long after the event, and is known in many respects to be historically inaccurate. How much of the so-called laws of Moses originated with that great lawgiver no man can find out, but it is known that the collection in both its varying versions was put together and published centuries after his time. Of course there were interpolations and additions, and accumulations. Otherwise, we must suppose there was no progress in priestly legislation in the long intervals of the monarchy to the reformation of Josiah. O, the whole thing and the process of its accumulation and putting in form is so very human, so analogous to what was done elsewhere in the world, that the old theories and notions about it are utterly untenable to any one who studies and thinks, or even reads the record itself, in the light of modern knowledge. It is simply astonishing that ink should still be wasted in defence of the fetichism or that peculiar notion of 'divine inspiration' which would authenticate these records as infallibly correct.

"What is true of the Mosaic books is

also true of the historical annals that follow. They were made up in the form in which we have them long after the events and from various materials. They contain crudities and inconsistencies, inversions and derangements, injections and excrescences, such as it would be natural to expect, considering the lack of literary workmanship on the part of the scribes of those days. There are some rather curious legends and tales withal, but what is Samson compared to Hercules and Theseus, or Saul's experience with the Witch of Endor and the ghost of Samuel by the side of many ancient oracles and Sibylline revelations? Why deny to those old Jews the right which all other peoples have exercised to account for things and to illustrate their belief in the supernatural by the use of the imagination?

"I read the Old Testament a good deal, and much of it is mighty good reading. It contains a wonderful record of the development of a remarkable people and the growth in the world of religious ideas some of which must still be ac-

cepted as fundamental. But, then, the laws of Moses contain many barbarisms and comparatively little of permanent value. The moral and social standard of the Jews was not high on the whole, even in precepts attributed to Jehovah; their conception of God was Oriental and one-sided, at first monstrous, then despotic, and their forms of worship were gross, but doubtless fitted to the condition of their people. They had no notion of the immortality of the soul or of other sanctions for conduct than worldly well-being. All the threats of punishment and promises of reward related to this life. Possibly Moses, who, being educated as an Egyptian prince and priest, was of course familiar with the idea of immortality, purposely kept it out of view in order to bring to bear direct material motives on the gross minds of his degraded and slavish people; perhaps he did it to have no Egyptian associations in their simple theocracy. Higher conceptions they derived from other Eastern races after their own 'Divine revelation' was completed. What good can come

from continuing to call that collection of their literature which has been kept together so long and translated into so many languages under the name, Old Testament, the inspired word of God or even sacred Scriptures? What sense is there in making a fetich of it?

"You might say, what harm does it do if the delusion operates as a restraint and helps to keep human beings upon their good behavior? My answer is that it is ceasing to have that effect, because people are ceasing to believe in the old view, and the Church by maintaining it is losing its hold upon honest convictions. I detest all hypocrisy and false pretence and all deliberate use of delusion to control people's conduct. I am persuaded that ministers and a large majority of adult male church members have no belief in the old doctrine of Divine Revelation and the inspiration of the Scriptures in the exclusive sense in which those phrases have been applied to the Hebrews. Why keep up the pretence? The rising generation will not be imposed upon by it; the godless crowd cannot be

won by it; and more and more earnest, thinking, and educated people will be repelled from the service of the Church.

"Why, it is the clinging to 'creeds outworn' and doctrines decayed that makes the religion of Christianity open to attacks that cannot be successfully repelled, and it is melancholy to see great audiences paying to be entertained and amused by such attacks. Colonel Ingersoll talks about the 'mistakes of Moses' in matters of science and social regulation, and people laugh. But, pray, why should not Moses, or those who wrote about him make mistakes in the infancy of civilization, and what has it to do with anything vital to Christian faith to-day? Let go the notion that this old record is the Word of God and therefore necessarily infallible, and such attacks fall harmless. When Ingersoll says that the Hebrew God of the Moses and Joshua era was, according to modern ideas, a monster in some of his aspects, in his wrath and jealousy and vengeance; in his delight in bloody sacrifices; in his sanction of slavery and polygamy and concubin-

age, and of atrocities in war, he says what is indisputably true, and all attempts to answer him are impotent. But admit that this was only the crude human conception of a deity, reflecting the character of the people believing in Him, and that these barbarisms belonged to the time and the people, and such onslaughts are harmless. It is not safe to stick to indefensible ground, and that is the trouble with the orthodox disputants in these controversies. The attacks are telling, and doing harm, and it would be an immense gain for mankind if the Christian Church would only take a new position, accepting all the results of learning and reason as parts of its very foundation. Then it could bring to its service the best intellect, the soundest moral conviction, and the most zealous activity, extend its organization and do the work of regenerating mankind, which is needed as much now as ever, but which needs to be carried on by new methods."

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When this discourse ended, Colonel

Bloodgood drew a long breath, as if relieved of a tiresome subject, and lighted a fresh cigar. "O well," he grunted, "what's the use? Let's get out into the air. I feel as though I had been listening to a sermon."

Tom seemed bewildered again and somewhat depressed, and hurried away. I remained alone a while, comfortably cogitating and wondering at the various ways in which human brains are occupying themselves nowadays.

## IX.

### SWITCHED OFF TO THE QUESTION OF IRISH-AMERICANS.

"NOW, I tell you, Judge," the Colonel was saying as I entered the midnight conclave, "all this palaver of yours about what the Church and church people ought to do is of no earthly use. You have your own views of society and morals and religion, and I have mine, and, thank goodness, the time has gone by when anybody can interfere with them or prevent our expressing them, and why should we worry ourselves about the beliefs or the ways of doing things of people who are more pious than we are? They may be narrow and bigoted and short-sighted and all the rest of it, but it doesn't hurt us, and we can't help it. I have no sort of faith in your new reformation and putting Christianity on a basis of modern thought. Things will

drift along, and the evils and abuses which you think the Church ought to tackle, whatever they are, will probably get worse until society in self-defence will organize into associations for ethical culture or moral improvement, and this, that, and the other thing to teach people what their own self-interest requires. Meantime, the Church will stick to the miraculous and the supernatural, and work upon the remnants of superstition and drag more and more behind the age. Anyhow, you and I won't live to see any material change in its attitude. Let's talk about something else."

"All right, Colonel," replied the Judge, with a cheery laugh, "I am not trying to head a moral and religious revolution, but only give my personal views on such matters as come up. I doubt if any one man can greatly hurry up the evolution of the human race or if any institution can do much to hinder it. Certainly private conversation in the recesses of the Asphodel will not have much effect upon it one way or another. Start your own

topic, for you must have something on your mind."

"Well, I want to ask the assembled company a question, a sort of national conundrum. What, in your opinion, is the greatest calamity that ever befell this country?"

The assembled company was not in a mood for answering conundrums, but Mr. Benedict ventured the opinion that the African slave-trade in which our enterprising fathers indulged might be considered quite a calamity and the source of greater calamities; but that did not lead up to the Colonel's train of thought, and he repudiated it as an answer to the question.

"I have no fancy for going into blind pools or answering blind questions," quoth the Judge; "and as you evidently put the question because you have an answer for it yourself, out with it. As the middleman at the minstrels would say, What *is* the greatest calamity that ever befell this country?"

"The potato rot in Ireland."

"Well," said the innocent and short-

seeing Tom, "I should say that that was a great calamity for Ireland, but how was it a calamity for this country?"

"On the contrary, it was a comparative blessing to Ireland and for Irishmen; but for this country I consider it an awful calamity in starting that tide of emigration that has played the devil with us ever since. Why, it sent into this country about the most undesirable, the most mischievous, the most damnable element of population that could have been scraped out of the corners of the earth, and a large proportion of the public evils that we have to contend against are due to this infernal Irish element."

"Oh, come now," replied the Judge, deprecatingly, "you are addicted to exaggeration, and you put it too strongly."

"Not a bit, not a bit! Look at the criminal records and notice the proportion of Irish names among those who are guilty of crimes of violence and disorder. If there is a row on the street there is pretty sure to be an Irishman at the bottom of it. Who constitute the 'gangs' that infest certain quarters of the city and

terrorize the neighborhood? Irishmen every time. If a picnic or social gathering degenerates into a drunken fight it always appears that the rowdy element that does the mischief is Irish. Talk about the evils of the liquor traffic! Who keep the worst and most disorderly saloons? Who violate and evade the laws and show a contemptuous disrespect for public authority in the matter? Your McGlorys and Geoghegans and Flanagans and Sharkeys and others of their ilk, with mighty few exceptions. They seem to take to whiskey-selling and politics as ducks take to water, and this Irish mixing of whiskey and politics is accountable for much of the degeneration in both. Take the labor question and the conduct of labor organizations. The noisy, blatant, pushing Irishmen, full of ignorance, prejudice and passion, and devoid of sense, intellectual or moral, are what set the business astray. It is they that bring in boycotting, violence, and unjust methods, which do harm to both sides and good to neither. It is the Irishmen among workingmen that are all the time setting up

labor parties and using the right of suffrage as a bludgeon to intimidate people who know better into doing foolish things. They bedevil the prison labor question and a thousand other questions through the labor vote and the Irish vote, which the politicians dread because it may turn the party scale any time, without regard to sense or reason.

"It is because the Irish vote is not guided by principle or conviction or patriotism or sense of right, or anything else but Irish prejudice and recklessness, that it is so formidable and demoralizing. It plays the very devil with politicians and public men, who are afraid of its rushing to one side or the other and upsetting their calculations, simply because it cannot be enlightened or reasoned with, but is liable to be swayed by all manner of appeals to prejudice and passion. How utterly impotent and absurd that whole Murchison-Sackville business would have been if there had been no Irish in this country, or if the Irish were people of sense! It is their

disregard of reason and lack of sense of moral responsibility, their disrespect for public authority and the necessary restraints of law, that have caused most of the evils of public administration, especially in cities. They push into the retail liquor business and ward politics, take possession of primary meetings and get into office, and what is the consequence? They have no scruple about buying or selling votes or public privileges or legislation, and they are sure to use any position they can get for their own benefit and that of their friends, without regard to public rights or public interests. There are other rascals in politics and in office, but the Irish have led the way, established evil practices, and become so much of a force that the others are emboldened, and men of decent instincts are overwhelmed or driven out. The old Tweed business would have been impossible but for the Irish power and influence in New York politics. So would 'boodle' aldermen and the infamous buying and selling of franchises and of legislation. It is the Irish de-

pravity and cussedness, with its reckless push and grab, that has been the main factor in demoralizing politics, municipal administration, State legislation and the whole business.

"Another thing. Who brought the Catholic Church into this country and set up its influence against the very spirit of our institutions? The Irish. The attacks upon the public-school system come from them and their priests. They are responsible for diverting public funds from public purposes to the support of private sectarian institutions. The Catholic Church would undermine the very principles of our Government if it could, and its power is altogether out of proportion to the number of its adherents on account of its aggressive and insidious methods and its control over that Irish vote of which I was speaking.

"Besides, when great questions of national policy are to be settled, involving the welfare of the country and its people, how do the Irish act in politics? Do they study, and try to understand the questions at issue, and act upon rea-

son and conviction with reference to the interests of the United States, or are they swayed by what some party convention or some prominent politician may have said about Ireland or the Irish cause on the other side of the ocean? Is love of America and her institutions and devotion to her welfare more potent than hatred of Great Britain, even when nothing that concerns either Ireland or Great Britain is in any way involved? That peaceful and profitable relations with Great Britain are our best policy is plain enough to any man of sense, and nobody would think of seeking or risking any other, unless forced to it by most potent reasons, but for the pernicious influence of the cursed Irish. Bah! No calamity ever befell this country to be compared with that which set the flow of Irish immigration to our shores, and our strongest ground of resentment against Great Britain is the policy that reduced the Irish to the necessity of emigrating."

"Well, well," ejaculated the Judge, when Colonel Bloodgood stopped for

breath. "Got through with your tirade against your fellow-citizens of Irish extraction?"

"I don't know whether I have or not. There are probably a lot of counts in the indictment that I have forgotten to mention, but perhaps I have made my reason clear for deploring that potato rot."

"O, but," quickly replied the Judge, "I imagine this immigration would have come if that particular event had not occurred, though not with such a sudden rush at the start. There are other causes back of that, causes that made the failure of one particular crop produce a famine in a country naturally capable of providing for a much larger population. There is some basis of truth for your sweeping assertions, of course; but they do no sort of justice to the Irish. I do not believe their coming here will prove to be a national calamity to the country in the end. I consider them very good raw material for citizens; rather too raw, perhaps, and introduced too suddenly and rapidly for the immediate good of the body politic, but destined in the

long run to furnish a very excellent and useful strain to our conglomerate population.

"You must consider why the Irish exhibit some unpleasant characteristics. Aside from the fact that they are an impulsive race, rather apt to feel more strongly than they think, the experience of generations has had a great effect upon them as a people, and their experience has been altogether exceptional. You speak of their disrespect for public authority and their disregard for law. Well, for generations they have had a foreign authority imposed upon them which has had very little regard for their rights and interests, and they have hated and resisted it, not without reason. They have been accustomed to have laws made for them, with very little voice of their own in the matter, and these laws have sacrificed them and their substance for the profit or benefit of others, and so they have come to regard it as a merit to evade the laws and fight against those set to enforce them. Consider the confiscation of their lands; the establishment of alien

ownership; the system of landlordism, absenteeism, the extraction of the wealth of the soil to be carried off and spent elsewhere, and the impoverishment of its occupants; the crushing of Irish industries, one after another, in the interest of English trade, and the destruction of the possibilities of commerce in Ireland itself by a cruel and selfish policy. All this has produced at once poverty and ignorance, for education comes only through some degree of freedom and prosperity. The unjust oppressions and repressions only intensified attachment to the Catholic Church, which became the only friendly power the people could look up to. What reason have these people had for attachment to civil authority, respect for laws, and devotion to the interests of the Government?"

"But I am not talking about the Irish in Ireland," answered the Colonel. "I will admit all you please about the wrongs they have suffered and the reasons they have at home for hating England. But when they come over here and become citizens why should they

bring their Irish cause and their anti-British feeling into our affairs, and maintain an attitude toward authority and legal restraint here that they have no reason for?"

"Because you cannot expect a people to be transformed all at once by a change of skies. I do not count it against them by any means that they retain their keen attachment for their native land and their kindred, and feel an intense sympathy for the cause which they leave behind without meaning to turn their backs upon it. I do not wonder in the least that they cherish their hatred of England and their love and devotion for their Church and their priests. As to their failure to respect authority and law and to appreciate the demands of government here, the habits and tendencies produced by generations of experience will not change suddenly under new conditions. Their lack of education and discipline cannot be supplied all at once; the results of a total inexperience in self-government and in the regulation and management of affairs cannot be overcome in a few years'

time, and the attitude of mind and feeling produced by oppression and wrong will persist in spite of everything. That the mass of Irish in this country have not the right appreciation of the duties and responsibilities of citizenship, a sound feeling in regard to the submission due to public authority and the respect due to law, or an enlightened capacity for the tasks of citizens in legislation and administration, is not at all strange, and cannot be regarded as 'inexcusable.'"

"That's all right enough," exclaimed the Colonel, "if they only had a decent modesty and would let things alone until they learn something. But they seem to think that they can run things and that they have a right to run them, and they push in, to the disgust of their betters, and make a mess of it. They want to make laws and administer them and violate them all at once."

"Well," replied the imperturbable Judge, "perhaps the fact that they have so long been deprived of the powers and rights of citizens and have been striving so hard to get a chance to use them may

account for the eagerness with which they plunge into political activity and the ardor with which they seek opportunities for doing something in the way of government. Of course, so long as they are badly equipped by education, training, and experience, and have no clear standard of action worthy of the citizens of a free country, the practical result is in many ways bad. But the qualities they display have their good side. Their strong attachment to their own land and race may in time be transferred to their adopted country and converted into a deep and wholesome patriotism. Their eagerness and activity in politics and public affairs are not bad things in themselves. If people of native blood and of long American descent had more of that disposition and did some of the pushing it would be better for them. A willingness to do public work needs only to be united with capacity and high motives to become a salutary force, and this Irish peculiarity of seeking a chance to share in making and administering the laws would not be mischievous if prop-

erly inspired and guided, as it may be in time.

"We must look on the favorable as well as the unfavorable side of the Irishman as a possible American, and consider what he may become under the influence of education and political experience. While you find fault with the Irish character, you have probably known of individual cases in which it is revealed in an exceptional attachment, fidelity, and trustworthiness. We know there have been Irish patriots, statesmen, orators, judges, equal to the best. With our bad specimens in the Board of Aldermen, the Legislature, and elsewhere we have still found even here and in these days some of our ablest and most upright public men among those of Irish birth or descent. It shows what they are capable of and what they may come to as a factor in our citizenship. Let their love of liberty, their strong attachment to race and country, their ardor for public activity, and even their fidelity to their Church be gradually pervaded by a truer enlightenment and toned up to a higher

level of real conscientiousness—converted into genuine American patriotism—as the best tendencies and developments of the race show that they may be, and the Irish will become a valuable element in our population. We need an infusion of their traits, and when they really get infused into the national blood they will have a good effect.

"I tell you it is the combination of races and characteristics that is to make the American character great and solid in the future. The English current as modified by the soil is deep and strong, and will be the solvent, but it will be improved by the Irish ardor and self-assertion, the German sturdiness and liberality, the French lightness and keenness, and all the other moral and intellectual ingredients of nationality, when they become blended, as they will in time. You cannot make a new people in a generation, and we who are in the seething that the first mingling of elements produces are disturbed by the commotion; but the combination will be effected in time, the effervescence will subside, and the com-

pound will be wholesome. The strong Irish element has been poured in somewhat suddenly and rapidly, and it has some of the qualities of quick-lime, but it will furnish one of the best ingredients after all. The process of assimilation will go on with increasing rapidity as the first crudity of the elements is overcome and the streams of raw material diminish in volume, relatively to the whole mass at least, and we shall emerge safely from the incidental turmoil of the operation of compounding a people."

"O well, I suppose so," responded the Colonel, with something like a groan. "You are always looking away back or away ahead and finding comfort in the long run. But I am obliged to do my living just about now, and I would like to feel that something is finished and settled down, and to have things done decently and in order while I have some concern with them. I can't reconcile myself to nuisances because there are forces at work that will abate them after I am dead and gone; and to my mind

just here and now the Irish in America are an infernal nuisance."

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With this vigorous assertion of his original opinion the Colonel arose and led the way to a break-up of the party, a thing he does only when unusually excited.

## X.

### THE JUDGE GETS BACK TO MOSES AND THE PROPHETS.

TOM BENEDICT seems to have got into a very uneasy state of mind lately.

For my part, I like to hear the Judge talk, but am quite indifferent as to the subject of his discourse. I have no fondness at all for theological or religious discussion, and was always rather bored by it until I fell into the company of the Asphodel "Owls." The Colonel makes no concealment of his aversion to that kind of talk, and the Judge evidently has no preference for it. He rarely starts a subject himself, and can talk on one thing as well as another, and he seems to be about equally interested in all kinds of human topics.

At first Tom was disturbed by the free and easy discussion of religious questions, and seemed to be disposed to avoid

it. Then his mind appeared to get started on a novel line of thought—novel to him, though one would think it rather hackneyed by this time—and he became anxious to have the Judge go farther in the direction that had at first alarmed him. The Colonel had introduced that Irish conundrum of his for the purpose of getting clear of a field of discussion that was distasteful to him, and anticipated that it might be dropped and something fresh brought up at each sitting. The Judge showed no inclination to bring the old matter up again. But Tom, as I say, had been put into an uneasy frame of mind, and evidently could not get out of his head the questions that had been raised. Neither was he satisfied with the way in which they were left. He of the settled faith and confident convictions, to whom a questioning of the basis of traditional beliefs had been rather shocking than otherwise, was the one now to revert to the disquieting subject, as the dazzled moth is impelled to return to the light that is perilous to its fluttering life.

Conversation had been drifting among

desultory preliminaries and had settled down to nothing definite at the next convocation after the Irish discussion, when Tom, who had appeared to be under some uncommon constraint, finally broke out:

"Judge Truman"—I believe I have not let the Judge's name out before; but no matter, let it stand, he isn't ashamed of it—"Judge Truman, I am not satisfied with the way the great subject of Divine revelation has been left in our previous talks. I understood you to say that you had no objection to such phrases as Divine revelation and Divine Providence if their application was broad enough, and yet you do not accept the Scriptures as sacred in any special sense, or the record which they contain as a revelation of God's providence any more than any other human record. I don't think I have a clear idea of your position, and if it is not tiresome to the others, I should like to hear a further explanation."

The Colonel uttered a half-contemptuous grunt, rolled his cigar about under

his white mustache, and gave it a new grip with his teeth, but made no objection, and I readily acquiesced, and so the Judge opened his discourse in his quiet, off-hand way.

"It really seems rather queer to me," he began, "that in the light of the knowledge and thought of the day, accessible to everybody that can read and has ears to hear, these should be regarded as open questions at all, rather than accepted commonplaces; and the queerest thing of all is that it should cause distress of mind to intelligent and educated people to accept the conclusions of reason in place of the traditions of the Church: but I suppose I am unable to make sufficient allowance for the force of teachings that have come down from generation to generation in families, where they begin early with the feelings and sentiments and get little hold on the intellect.

"What you call my position is not mine particularly. It is simply the position that any rational mind is impelled to hold if it gets rid of prejudices and does its own thinking in the light of this

present year of grace as it shines on the American metropolis.

"The highest conception that we can now form of the God of the universe, accepting all that science and history and reason teach, is of course nearer to a true conception than any that was possible before this present age of the world; and whatever the Almighty may be now, he was at the beginning of human history, and has been all through it, and will be to the end. He was not one thing to Moses and the prophets, another thing to the apostles, and yet another to the Christian Church of the Middle Ages and to the churches, mosques, and temples of to-day. It is humanity that has changed and not divinity; it is humanity and not divinity that varies all over the earth now. If the Almighty has looked after the development of the human race at large and in detail in the sense implied in speaking of Divine Providence, I opine that he had just as much to do with ancient Egyptian and Persian civilization as with that of Canaan and Judæa, just as much with China and India and Greece

and Rome as with Palestine. People speak of such men as Washington and Lincoln and Grant as having been raised up by Providence at critical times for a special service. Well, in a broad sense, that may be so. I never dispute such statements, though I may interpret them in my own way, but I am sure that they are raised up by Providence just as much as Moses and Joshua and David were, and that the annals of modern history and literature contain just as much of revelation as those of any ancient people whatever.

"Take this question of Moses and the prophets, which signifies practically all the human history of the Old Testament. Now, as I have said before, I have a great admiration for Moses and his work, and only wish the record could be distinctly reduced to its historical elements and Moses could get full credit for what he did. He was a great leader among his people, a good deal of a statesman for the rude age in which he lived,—in short, a genius, appearing at just the right time for a great work. Perhaps that is Provi-

dential, but I do not see how it differs essentially from the appearance of any other great genius who turns to the task of his time and people, which is waiting for the hand that can perform it, and gets the thing done. We now know that the record of Moses and what he did was made up ages after his time out of various materials handed down through priests and scribes and mingled with traditions and legends. The accumulations of priestly legislation were all attributed to him and through him to Jehovah, and the mass cannot be fully analyzed now, and it would be of no particular use if it could. The record is framed in myths and the kind of explanations that always accompany the first attempt to account for known events.

"First, the world and its inhabitants are accounted for in a rude fashion; then the Hebrew race and its claims upon the territory it seized and occupied, and finally the bondage and oppression in Egypt of the descendants of Israel, from which Moses rescued them. Doubtless Abraham may be regarded as a person-

ification of the ancestral Hebrew, who impressed strong characteristics upon his race, and the patriarch story probably has elements of history in it. But the Jehovah and the Elohim to whom so much is attributed are just exactly as historical as Baal and Dagon, or Zeus and Jupiter. It is no more strange of this than of any other primitive people that they should attribute everything to their deity,—for they all did it. The Joseph story is to my mind the most interesting of Scripture legends, and there is doubtless the shadow of historic fact in it. But famine in a region of deserts and watercourses was no uncommon thing and always meant the shifting of locality by nomadic tribes dependent upon their herds and flocks. The settling in Egypt was a natural event enough and the subsequent oppression was nothing strange. But the great achievement was the rescue of that people from bondage, the making of a nation in what was called 'the wilderness,' and the establishing of that nation in the land which it claimed as the heritage of

its forefathers. That was a great exploit, and the man who conceived and carried it out should have at least as much credit for it as other great men get for what they do.

"Moses understood the Egyptians as well as the Israelites, and he took advantage of the periodical plagues and scourges to which they were subject and of their superstitions; he fanned the ancestral pride of his own people and excited their hopes of freedom and of becoming one of the nations of the earth, and he was remarkably favored by circumstances, as other men of genius have been at critical times since then. So he got that people out of Pharoah's clutches with great skill and energy, and put the Red Sea between them and the land of bondage. Of course, in after ages the achievement was surrounded with signs and wonders and mythical doings, but what of it? So have other great achievements been enveloped in the same way.

"I take that Pentateuchal account of the wandering in the wilderness to be mainly mythical. Historical light reaches

that far with uncertain glimmerings, and we know that Moses had got his people into a country where they could live and wait. Their ancestors were nomadic and accustomed to wandering with flocks and herds. Headquarters were established at the great well of Kadesh. Around the rescued people were related tribes from which they received accessions. Canaan was occupied by a stronger people than they, and to get possession was no small undertaking. Moses was not fool enough to rush helter-skelter over Jordan with an unorganized and undisciplined mass of people unfit for war and not ready for national existence. He addressed himself to the task of organizing, disciplining, training, and preparing that people for its great undertaking, and it is no wonder if it took forty years and was attended with difficulties and perplexities, and if at last he had to leave the actual invasion to a military leader whom he had succeeded in raising up.

"You must remember that after all this was practically a mere tribe of people, divided into clans, the population of

a good-sized county, and that the land which they looked upon as theirs, and which they were determined to get possession of, was not much larger than the State of Connecticut. They had to wait and to prepare themselves, and to get accessions from neighboring tribes and to look out for a favorable opportunity for attack, when the Canaanites had trouble on their hands. And after all, there was no driving out and taking full possession, but a long struggle occupying hundreds of years, a gradual conquest and subjection, and an amalgamation more or less complete with the former occupants of the territory. It was a process quite analogous to others going on from time to time in the world's history.

"But I am wandering somewhat from my main point, which was simply to mention that Moses, as a typical Biblical character, was simply a man using human agencies to accomplish terrestrial objects for his people.

"Now I am going to make one of my blunt assertions that you, at least, my dear Tom, are apt to regard as startling,

if not shocking. The work of Moses was political, and not religious in any modern sense. The so-called theocracy which he established was a matter of politics and statesmanship, with a purpose as worldly as the laws of Solon or the Constitution of the United States. I do not mean that he did not share in his people's belief in their God or in their awe of the dreadful power of Jehovah which they beheld in the operations of the elements, but he developed and applied that belief for the purpose of giving them the solidarity of a nation. He reminded them of the traditional promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and tried to impress them with confidence in their fulfilment. One thing he must have or fail in his design, and that was submission and obedience. He stood little chance of getting it for himself, but he might get it for Jehovah, and he strove to fill the minds of the people with fear and dread of that Being and to keep them in constant subjection to commands from One with power to punish as well as to reward. He must keep the people to-

gether, preserve their identity, and fill them with patriotic ardor for their own great cause, to prevent them from mingling with other tribes and being absorbed in them.

"The most emphatic commands and fiercest threats were directed against the worship of the other gods of those tribes, or any form of worship akin to it. And rightly too, for all of the idolatrous paganisms involved such worship of the powers of nature as led peoples and priesthoods into the foulest and most obscene practices, ruinous to all physical, mental and moral stamina. Half the laws and ordinances were intended to fix the minds of the people in subjection to the unseen Ruler and Leader whom Moses professed to represent, and to keep their thoughts upon His promises and threats. That was the purpose of the elaborate worship and the offerings upon the altars, of the strict Sabbath and the periodical feasts. The 'Jehovah'—the 'I am'—of the Mosaic announcement was a pure, wholesome and holy conception of deity; but he was Israel's God and the enemy

of all other gods, and he was capable of destructive anger and fury of which all must beware. He must be obeyed or all would be lost, and the theocratic system was intended to keep this people in subjection to leadership and to government."

"But you do not mean," exclaimed Tom, "that Moses deceived the people of Israel to secure obedience?"

"Well, this is said to have been some four thousand years ago, and it was a rude stage of intellectual and moral development. How many great leaders in political movements since then have used the means to control masses of people which they found to be most effectual for the purpose! Your judgment is warped by the habit of regarding those old Hebrews as different from human nature elsewhere and since. Haven't we living evidences of some of the characteristics of that race in which inherited peculiarities are especially persistent? Are there no instances of deception in the accounts of Jacob or in the conduct of other ancient Israelitish rulers than Moses, deceptions even which are openly attributed

to the counsel of Jehovah? Moses had an intense and fiery nature; he was in dead earnest; he had turned his back upon the delights of civilization and royalty; he had, like Mohammed after him, lived in the deserts alone with his projects and his God; he was absolutely consecrated to his great work. So Moses may have believed in the promises and purposes of Jehovah, and regarded himself as an instrument in carrying them out: but it was his own plans and commands that he always attributed to that source, and his own scheme of worship and of government for which he claimed a divine sanction, and I have no doubt he used 'signs and wonders' so far as he could to impress the people, without any actual supernatural intervention.

"Why, think for one moment; in spite of all your prejudices and teachings you cannot possibly identify that Hebrew Deity with your own conception of God. Then it was not a reality, but the conception of the time and the people, and a mere popular conception of Deity does not give actual commands and make

actual demonstrations of a concrete presence. Consider, further, that the record which we are considering was made up long after the events, and we cannot fully separate the real Moses from the half-mythical man of God which he became.

"I tell you, the theocracy and the theocratic system was a great thing, and served a great purpose, but it was as much a human device as the system of Lycurgus in Sparta. It was the means by which the Hebrew nation was established and made great. It was not very lofty so far as social, domestic, and personal virtues are concerned, although it was far above the level of the times; but it was shrewdly devised for the safety of the community, and inculcated those precepts that were for the security of the state. It had to do wholly with the earthly well-being of one people, and its religious sentiment was in reality mainly a sentiment of patriotism.

"Moses accomplished his work, and the nation got itself on foot after a fashion, and had its worldly vicissitudes. It

ruled itself through judges, as they were called,—though really they seem to have been gallant military leaders,—and at length they set up a kingdom. It had its wars and struggles, which developed, as other such struggles have, a great conqueror and king in the person of David. It grew in wealth and power and luxury, and under Solomon rivalled the grandeur of other nations. It became corrupt and divided; and it was overrun and humbled by other nations.

"Read the story with open eyes and a clear head. The tale is interesting and instructive. Don't let dogmas and superstition spoil it for you, as they have for so many people. I believe if the Old Testament could be stripped of those antique wrappings that have so long mummified it, it would be read much more than it is, and would contribute more to the enlightenment of the world. I would like to see the superstitious view of it dispelled and a sensible one accepted, not for the purpose of weakening its influence, but in order to get rid of distorted views which are a hindrance

to its proper and wholesome influence. I believe it would then be read and studied much more than it is now, for the Bible-reading habit seems to me to have largely gone out. An aversion to it has been bred in healthy minds by theology and dogmatism, and it is a pity.

"I know it is claimed that the Bible is *studied* more widely by the people at large to-day than ever before. If so, I am glad of it, although that has not been my observation; but to whatever extent this is true, it will be found to be in consequence of the admission of the light of new discoveries, fresh criticism in philology, and in general the application of my favorite solvent—common sense—to the interpretation of its poetic legends and Oriental mysticisms, making the Scriptures teachers of ethics rather than of theological systems.

"Another good effect of a common-sense view of its character would be to promote the collection of the really valuable and instructive parts without any rubbish, and the proper collating and simplifying of records of events, with

rational elucidations and explanations. We might get a common-sense commentary in place of the bewildering mass of lumber which laborious divines have piled all over it."

"But," said Tom, as the Judge paused, "I thought you were going to say something about the prophets as well as about Moses. It seems to me you will have to admit some special inspiration in their case."

"Well, it is getting late, and I reckon I have said enough for the present. I don't believe the Colonel could stand any more to-night; but perhaps, if it is not too wearisome for him, we can take the subject up again."

"O, I can stand it," the Colonel rejoined, cheerfully, pulling at his cigar to bring up its dying fire. "In fact, I rather like to hear you ripping and tearing the old creeds and dogmas, and letting fresh air into the tombs of theology, and then we may get the light of reason and common sense into Tom's head, and it will do him good. He is worth saving, and I am willing to be sacrificed in the good work."

So the party separated, the Judge and the Colonel going out arm in arm, and Tom and I sauntering up the street and quietly talking the matter over regardless of the late hour. Tom was uncommonly calm about it.

## XI.

### MORE DISCOURSE ABOUT ANCIENT SCRIPTURE.

"DON'T forget that you promised to give us your ideas about the prophets," said Tom rather anxiously to the Judge, as the conversation seemed to be drifting off in a wholly different direction.

"Did I make a promise?" responded the Judge, lifting his eyebrows. "I hardly think I could have done that, for it is a thing I try to avoid where promises are unnecessary. Minds and moods change so that easy promising is a bad practice. However, I have no objection, if it is agreeable to the company, to talking Scripture again, though it seems next to impossible to get people to look at the subject with a straight vision. It is really curious, the misconceptions that exist about the Bible and especially the Old Testament, after ages of systematic

teaching of them as Holy Scripture—misconceptions and false notions as to what they really contain.

"I think I have mentioned more than once the fact that the Hebrews, during the period of their literature which Christians call sacred, had no conception of the immortality of the soul or of a future life. How many devout Bible readers are conscious of that most significant fact? Most of the law had nothing to do even with morals, and the observances it imposed had no spiritual purpose or meaning whatever. The restraints necessary to social order and national development were recognized, but every promise and sanction related to mundane well-being, and even the prophets in their loftiest flights recognized no destiny for man beyond this world. The idea of justice and righteousness was highly developed under their teaching, but it was inculcated for its value to the community and to the national life. Even the great poem of Job, which was intended to illustrate an unswerving confidence in the justice of Jehovah and a

vindication of that confidence, was confined to this human life for working out its theory of divine compensation, and hence was inevitably in contradiction of a large part of human experience, for the righteous are not always rewarded and the wicked punished in this world. The collection of national proverbs and wise sayings, to which the name of Solomon was attached, contains no wisdom but that of this earthly stage of being, and the most devotional of the Psalms, most of them of a date long after David, contain no hint of the rewards of a life hereafter. Although, as I said the other night, Moses must have been familiar with the conception of immortality among the Egyptians, the ideas that came to prevail among the Jews on this subject before the time of Jesus were derived primarily from the Persians in the time of the captivity and from other heathen sources.

"The whole angelology and demonology which the early Christian writers mixed with their theology is of pagan origin. The old Hebrews had little or

nothing of it. Like all primitive people and like imaginative children of to-day, they had notions of unseen and malevolent beings, dwelling in lonely places, but Satan came from the Zoroastrian mythology, and the very scanty references to such a personage are in writings made up after the Exile. How many times do you suppose Satan, as a personification, is mentioned in the Old Testament? Just five, and three of those are in the book of Job, where he is represented as an agent of Jehovah for testing his servant of the land of Uz. Did you ever think how much the ideas of English-speaking people about the Bible are derived from Milton and not from the Bible itself? Milton injected the demonology and angelology of later times, in which he was richly versed, into the Garden of Eden in a most extraordinary fashion. The so-called sacred record has no hint of it. In the simple tale of Genesis there is no devil and no Satan, but the tempter was simply the serpent—just the snake of the fields and nothing else. The Hebrew mythology was strikingly barren of su-

pernatural creatures aside from the Elohim and the great Jehovah, and an occasional angel—messenger—from Him.

"The prophets enlarged and elevated the conception of Jehovah and his attributes. He was originally a tribal deity, dwelling in storms and darkness, in tempests and fire, and on inaccessible mountain-tops, making terrible visits to the camp of his people, and taking up his abode in a gilded box within a special tent. With the attributes of power, of wrath, of jealousy, and vengeance, he was used to control a superstitious and unruly people. He was pretty well forgotten and neglected except by a few priests during the period of national development, and when the era of reformation came, the struggles with foreign enemies, and the captivity and the restoration, he appears with quite a new character. There were seers and prophets, as among other ancient peoples, and marvellous legends were preserved about them. Sometimes they broke out against the doings of the people and their rulers and uttered terrible warnings, and sometimes

their counsel had much influence even with Kings and great warriors. Of course, they represented a genuine reform element, both in patriotism and religion, and were generally accepted as the mouth pieces nd agents of Jehovah. Sometimes they mysteriously disappeared and were said to be snatched up by Jehovah himself.

"But what we mean by the prophets of Israel were the preachers and reformers of a later day, some of whose utterances were most lofty and impassioned. A very distorted view of them, however, has been produced by magnifying the predictive element in the oracles they left behind—or those attributed to them, for these were collected after their time, and some were incongruously patched together and assigned to the wrong authors, while in some there are undoubted interpolations. But their general character and purpose are easily understood. They are extremely human productions, these so-called prophecies, with most decidedly worldly ends in view, though highly patriotic and im-

pressive for the most part. It was the primary purpose of these great preachers to restore veneration for Jehovah and submission to his laws. The original theocracy had been lost sight of by rulers and people; for a long time the law was forgotten and its observances neglected, while worship was paganized in the high places. The result was a relaxation of the true national spirit of Israel and of the pride of race, with a loss of that peculiar Jehovistic patriotism that gave courage and confidence in war and kept the people from heathen degradation in peaceful times. The prophets in preaching reform, in uttering threats and warnings, in recalling promises and predicting disaster or triumph, spoke in the name of Jehovah as all the teachers of Israel had been wont to do, and as those characterized as false prophets and denounced by Jeremiah and others did also.

"Of course they regarded themselves as chosen and commissioned for their special work, but so do many preachers nowadays. Some of them represented

their commission as being imparted in visions and supernatural revelations, in which they may easily have been sincere, for they were all men of the excitable organization called 'the prophetic temperament.' Yet even that is a condition not unknown in modern times. How about Bunyan's immortal dreams and visions, for instance? Why allow Ezekiel and Daniel less liberty or more inspiration? But, like Moses, these great reformers were politicians or statesmen more than theologians in our sense. They were concerned not about the salvation of souls, but about the salvation of their people as a political body and a nation. They preached a high morality in some respects, but it was mainly with reference to maintaining the social and political strength of the people. That vice and iniquity, injustice and oppression, and disregard of the authority of law sap the fibres of national strength and degrade a people, making them easy victims to their enemies, was not a secret confined to Hebrew teachers, and it needed no special revelation. In all

times of social and political degeneration there are men of clear vision, strong convictions, and unflinching courage to denounce the evils of the time and utter warnings of the consequences."

"But," exclaimed Tom, "these prophets did predict future events, did they not?"

"Yes, and so have a great many other reformers, and as far as they have had real insight and foresight their predictions have been substantially fulfilled. When such a people as Israel were lapsing into idolatry and corruption, and forgetting the spirit of their fathers; when they had incompetent, dishonest, and degraded rulers, and were surrounded by active enemies, it needed no supernatural vision to foresee the consequences, and nothing but courage to predict them. To those who understood the power and the aggressive policy of Assyria and Babylonia and Persia, when the line of their conquests encroached upon the borders of Israel, it was plain that nothing but the arousing of the pride and virtue of the people, the stimulating of

their confidence in their Divine Ruler, which was the source of their power, courage, and energy, would avert destruction from them; and it was almost equally plain that this would not be done, and that they would not be saved from conquest and captivity. The prophets cried out with a wonderful energy, setting forth the evils and iniquities with which the people were besotted, warning them of the inevitable consequences, appealing to them in the name of their God, reminding them of the promises of the past and the destiny to which the race was born. Of course they predicted; how could they help it? They used all the resources of their language, with its symbolism and Oriental imagery, to rouse and save a doomed people. So far as their predictions were definite, some of them were substantially fulfilled and some of them were not. They were speaking for a personal Ruler to whom they attributed certain set purposes and methods, and events went on in a natural course, as human events will, subject to laws and circumstances and

the character and condition of those involved. I can see no more divine agency or supernatural intervention in this history than in any other.

"There is one thing certain about those old prophets. They elevated the standard of social and political morality and exalted very much the conception of the Deity, extending his sway over all nations and recognizing in him the creator and ruler of the universe. Until after the Captivity and the contact with Persian and Babylonian mythology they had no angels or devils aiding or opposing the Almighty or interfering with mankind. That 'divine revelation' was not made to the chosen people, but to the heathen. Even Solomon's Cherubim and Seraphim were brought from Assyria by Hiram of Tyre.

"The heaven and hell that have figured so much in Christian theology have no germs or suggestions in the 'sacred literature' of the Hebrews. These were not 'revealed' to them. Late in their history they conceived of heaven as the dwelling-place of the

Almighty; and after the invasion of Persian mythological ideas there was an occasional injection into their literature of references to other occupants of the celestial region. It was not an abode of disembodied spirits. Men died and went into the darkness of Sheol, a place of death and inanition, never to return. It was not a place of doom, but of nothingness. I think if the Old Testament literature were studied and taught rationally it would be more useful and instructive to us and do more good in the world, and if the dogma of inspiration as it has been generally received were definitely discarded instead of being formally retained, a heavy shackle would be thrown from the minds of devout men, and religion would gain by it."

"But," Tom interjected, uneasily, as if fearful that the subject was about to be dropped, "you have said nothing about the most important aspect of the prophecies—the prediction of a coming Messiah."

"Well, in the sense commonly meant by it, I cannot find anything of the

kind in them. One of the chief burdens of the utterances of the prophets was their confidence, through all the evils and vicissitudes of Israel, in the traditional promise attributed to Jehovah of the greatness and perpetuity of the nation. When it was at its worst they declared that it would be purged of the elements of evil and impurity and regenerated; a purified remnant would be saved and re-establish the kingdom of David. Though they were overwhelmed and broken up and carried into captivity, it was only for their sins and their disobedience, and the same mighty arm that delivered them out of Egypt would yet rescue them and fulfil the convenant with Jacob. This hope and promise is what chiefly inspired the prophets, and in their varied forms of figurative speech they foretold that a great King would yet spring from the house of David and restore a purer and loftier theocracy, in which Jehovah should reign and his own anointed should sit on the throne to execute his will.

"You know that Messiah was the

Hebrew word for *anointed*, and was first applied to the priests and afterward to the kings. The hope with which Isaiah tried at once to arouse and cheer the people was undoubtedly that of the final restoration of the nation under the Davidic dynasty and its attainment of a grandeur never before known. His Messianic predictions and those attributed to other prophets clearly related to a national ruler, who should reign in righteousness and equity indeed, but whose dominion was to be as secular as that of David or Hezekiah. Those were among the predictions most conspicuously unfulfilled.

"It is a striking commentary on the Jehovah of the ancient Hebrews as the actual God of the universe and the persistent inclination to accept the records of their history and literary production as his inspired word, that, in point of fact, the one all-embracing promise of national greatness and perpetual dominion was constantly deferred and finally defeated in the completest fashion by the utter destruction of the nation and scattering of the people. Some of the

Jews, however, still cherish the promise and believe the prophecies will yet be fulfilled.

"The modification of the Messianic idea, after the hope of national reconstruction and greatness grew faint, which enabled the early Christians to lay hold upon it and make it one of the corner-stones of a fabric of dogma, came along after the prophecies that have been regarded as inspired. Isn't it a little curious that the modification and shaping of that idea, which prepared it for the early framers of Christian dogma, ran through the apocryphal books and the apocalyptic writings, which were excluded from the canon of genuine Scripture, and which have no claim to inspiration, but are mere profane productions of the human mind. Why, the Fathers of the Church, the makers of creeds, and the defenders of dogmas have drawn ten times as much from these old mystic sources as from either the Old Testament or the New."

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"Well," grumbled the Colonel, "I hope you are satisfied by this time, for

really I am getting sick of these discussions. I can stand them once in a while, but two in succession are a heavy dose. After all, what are all these heretical novelties, any way, but the commonplaces of common-sense?"

Tom left me that night with a cheerful avowal that he was going to enter upon a course of study of Scripture on his own account. He had thought he knew something about it, but was afraid he did not.

## XII.

### A DISCUSSION OF THE VALUE OF HUMAN EVIDENCE.

THE next Saturday night I got to the club uncommonly late, and just as I entered the room where midnight wisdom is dispensed the Colonel was saying with vigorous emphasis:

"I tell you human testimony isn't worth a rap anyway. There isn't more than one person in a hundred who can state a thing as it is, even when it is within his own knowledge, and there isn't one in a thousand who is habitually accurate or anywhere near it, or who even tries to be accurate; and when it comes to hearsay and second-hand statements, good Lord! the facts get distorted and mangled, so that a cautious man has to adopt the rule of believing nothing that he doesn't see and know for himself; and he has to be careful or he

will be deceived about what he thinks he sees and knows.

"It makes me laugh to see how resentful people are when their statements of facts are questioned and how wrathful they get when accused of lying. Why, lying is the principal use to which human speech is put, and those who get the maddest when accused of it are most addicted to it. A border-ruffian or a grog-shop loafer, who scarcely knows what it is to tell the truth, will make a killing matter of it. Duels have been fought because men of 'honor,' men who bragged about the sacredness of their word, have been 'insulted' by some one who charged them with lying. In nine such cases out of ten they did lie and knew it. The insult consisted in having the truth told to them.

"I have highly-respectable people tell me things every day which I know are not true, and which they know are not true; in many cases I know that they know they are lying, and they themselves rather suspect that I know it. It is a frequent experience with me to hear per-

sons relate the same thing twice, without any sort of agreement between their statements. I have even had the same thing told to me twice by the same person, at no very long interval, with utterly irreconcilable variations, and yet if I had plainly told him of the discrepancy he would have felt insulted and regarded me as an uncivil boor."

"Now let me interrupt you just here," mildly interposed the Judge, "before the point gets beyond recall. The case you just mentioned suggests another reason for the general lack of accuracy besides that of a want of veracity or a propensity for lying, and that is infirmity of memory. While it is true that people are wofully careless in their statements, there are very few clear and correct memories. A man who tells you the same thing twice in different ways has forgotten the second time that he ever told you about it before. He has also forgotten his first form of statement, and it is just as likely that he has forgotten the actual facts. Most memories are hazy; details get lost and confused in them,

the imagination undertakes to revive and supply these details and doesn't do it twice alike. Men with uncertain memories, lively imaginations, and a disposition to talk may get the reputation of being arrant liars when they do not in the least intend to falsify, and are not conscious of misrepresentation. They undertake to tell a thing of which they do not retain the details except in a vague way, and they give life to their narrative by supplying them as they go along as best they can. They repeat the matter to some one else, and both the actual details and those of their first story have fallen into obscurity in their minds and they have to furnish a new set, and in each case there is no real intention of departing from the facts. This does not militate against your statement as to the value of evidence, but I should not call these inaccurate people liars. They do not deliberately misstate with intent to deceive."

"No, perhaps not," replied the Colonel, "but there are very few people who do not do that on occasion. Everything

depends upon whether there is a motive. Men will lie to get themselves out of an awkward corner, and make apologies and explanations that they know are not true. They will lie to gain a point of some kind, especially a point in which there is pecuniary profit. Why, I know men who stand high among their fellow-men—high in the Church, some of them—who will make statements to serve whatever purpose they may have in view, without the smallest regard for the facts. They wish to convince you of something or persuade you to do something, or to promote their own interests in some way or other, and they tell you the most favorable things that they can think of without the least regard for the truth."

"Well, that is more like lying than the other," replied the Judge, "but even that is not altogether wilful in many cases. I know just such men as you speak of, who would not only resent being told that they departed from the truth, but who are really not conscious of doing so. The moral nature, as well as the memory, is subject to a certain foggi-

ness. There are some men who cannot hold facts clearly in mind, who lack distinct perceptions of the moral value of the truth, but who in pleading a case or pursuing an object are possessed by a sort of emotional control that governs their words. They make statements, as you say, that have no relation to actual fact, and that exhibit no regard for the truth, but they are not aware of it at the time and cannot be convinced of it afterward. Such men have no idea of the estimation in which they are held by those who know them, and would be greatly surprised if told that they had a reputation for lying. If they were told so they would hardly believe it, and if persuaded of the fact, would honestly think that injustice was done them."

"I don't take quite so charitable a view of human nature as you do," the Colonel replied. "I believe people generally know when they are lying, and their moral weakness consists in not caring."

"O, of course, as to many people," the Judge responded; "it is deplorably com-

mon, no doubt, especially in the small affairs of life, but we must discriminate and recognize the things that ought to qualify our broad statements if we wish to be truthful and just ourselves. Go on, Colonel, you have the floor."

"Well, to get away from the small affairs of life. I hardly ever hear a public speaker of any kind or grade without being sure that he is wrong in most of his statements, and deliberately so in many of them. Political speakers, for instance, make all manner of distorted and garbled statements, mangle historical events, play the deuce with statistics, all for a purpose, and the proportion of truth in what they say could only be detected by a close analysis, which most people do not or cannot make. And preachers, Oh, my! what 'rousing whids' have I not heard them 'vend, and nail't wi' Scripture!' When I used to go to church—for I did go occasionally at one time—it was a marvel to me how men could stand in the pulpit and illustrate and enforce lessons, as they called them, with statements from history or biog-

raphy or practical life that had no semblance of truth in them. Twisting Scripture all out of shape and proving anything and everything with it is bad enough, but telling tales of everyday experience that are not true for the purpose of enforcing Divine truth always struck me as peculiarly atrocious."

"I do not go along with you altogether," remarked the Judge, as the Colonel showed an inclination to yield the floor to somebody else, "but I agree substantially with your main position as to the value of human testimony, especially in matters in which the feelings or emotions or sentiments of the witnesses are enlisted. Every lawyer knows how difficult it is to get witnesses to make a clear statement and stick to it, even when they have no intention to tell anything but the truth. Lawyers are often suspected of cooking up false evidence when they are merely trying to get their witnesses to tell a straight story, to clear up their memories and get the facts as they are. They find that a difficult job, and even when they think they have got the evi-

dence clearly laid out, the infirmities of their own witnesses are liable to upset it. The perceptions of most people are imperfect; their observations are inaccurate; their senses deceive them; their memories are misty and confused, and their feelings and motives get mixed up with their efforts to state facts, and so it is hard to get at the truth from their evidence.

"Take matters that get into print. We have a strange disposition to put confidence in what we see in print, 'in black and white,' as we say, as if black and white were more veracious than other colors, and we are inclined to believe something in a newspaper when we would not believe the same thing if it were told to us by the very man who has written it for the paper. Put it in a book and we hardly dare question it; give the book some peculiar sanction by a council of wiseacres and doubt is sacrilegious. Take any matter that comes within your own knowledge, which is reported in the public prints, and how often the statements seem to be incorrect

or misleading; and yet generally there are some pains taken to get the facts and to state them correctly. The character and conduct of men in public life is represented in such a variety of lights that nobody can tell what manner of men they really are; and when I have known one of these personages, whose behavior has been much discussed, it has amused me to think how different he was from any conception that could be formed of him from the evidence before the public.

"In a general way a public person may be said to have four distinct characters at least. There is the real person with his qualities, whatever they may be; there is the person as he estimates himself and as he tries to appear; there is the person as he is represented and measured by his friends and admirers; and there is the same person as portrayed by his enemies. The hardest of these to get at is the real person, and the different portraits interposed before the vision do not help much to the true idea. I suppose no person has any distinct or accurate notion of what others think of him. We do not

know the sound of our own voices, or at least we do not know how they sound to others, and there is a general conspiracy to keep us in the dark as to our own reputation among those about us. We may get vague hints of the opinion, favorable or otherwise, of various individuals, but the general impression, the character we bear in the view of others we can never clearly apprehend. We move in a world of mirrors and lenses with various angles of reflection and refraction, and the images are magnified, minified, distorted and colored, and altogether things are truly not what they seem.

"If it is so hard to get things truthfully stated and to apprehend them as they are in the present, with our own senses at work, with our personal knowledge of existing conditions and our ability to judge and to make allowances, how much harder must it be to know just what to believe in the records of the past—records made up at different times and in different lands, at all sorts of distances of time and place from the actualities, under

conditions that cannot be distinctly reproduced, and by men with various deficiencies, mental and moral, and various motives and purposes."

"Ah! I thought it was generally admitted," ejaculated the Colonel, "that history and biography are a pack of lies. They may be curious and interesting to look at, like a panorama, but we have to remember that we do not see the actual events or the actual men, but pictures of them made by artists more or less clumsy or more or less skilful, and all aiming at effect and not at truth."

"There you are again, with your extreme statements and your sweeping generalizations," replied the Judge. "There has been a good deal of conscience and careful labor put into efforts to reproduce the past truthfully, and by close study I think we may get a fairly correct idea of the most important phases of human experience. But it is only by comparing and sifting evidence. It is perfectly true that grave historians have been so biased or so hampered that they have put events on record in anything

but the true light, and personalities are the most difficult of all things in history to get a correct view of. If a man is important enough to go into history he loses some, if not all, the characters he had in life and acquires new ones. His real character, the man as he actually was, is apt to go out of sight almost wholly, and we get one or more reproductions of him with new lineaments. If he is written up by his enemies, as a strong person like Cromwell or Bonaparte is sure to be, we get his bad qualities magnified and his good ones suppressed or shaded out of sight, until he becomes a being that never existed. His admirers produce another image equally far from truth, and there are two Cromwells or Bonapartes, who never existed except on paper. Men are given to hero worship, and like to have their heroes painted on a great scale and in strong colors. Realistic biography is something we have rarely had. Men of action, whose lives are woven in with historical events, appear more nearly in their true proportions than those who as great leaders have gained an ascendency over

the sentiments and affections of their followers.

"But there is nothing in which human evidence is so uncertain and so untrustworthy as that which verges on the mystical and unknown, that excites credulity and the weakness for the supernatural which seems to be inherent in human nature. Did you ever undertake to investigate Spiritualism or Mesmerism? I did at one time, and everybody ought to do it once in his lifetime if he wishes to learn how little dependence is to be put on human testimony or even on the human senses. I have been told most marvellous things about mediums and clairvoyants by persons whose veracity I did not doubt, and yet when I tried to test them for myself I could find none of the marvels. The real thing and the reported thing were as unlike as mist and sunlight. For years I tried with all manner of mediums to get one simple and conclusive test of spirit-communication, but never got it. What stories are told of wondrous clairvoyant visions, of marvellous cures by

faith, and of the power of mind over mind!

"I do not deny that there is something at the bottom of these things. There seems to be a mysterious margin to life and experience extending into the unknown, and psychical research is groping over it. What it means and with what it connects I do not pretend to guess. The subjective action of faith and emotion is great with some people. There is a curious magnetism in personality of which we are all more or less conscious. Individual affects individual in a thousand different ways, and the influence of mind upon mind, or perhaps more strictly of temperament upon temperament, has no measure. One person may gain a mighty ascendency over another or over many others. In hypnotism, mesmerism, mediumship, clairvoyance, faith-cure, and all the rest, there is a vague something besides humbug and delusion, but it is so enveloped in these as to be difficult to study. In this realm of peculiar personal power and personal subjection to power, this occult region of intangible relations,

human evidence becomes almost absolutely worthless, and an attitude of scepticism is the only defence of an honest mind. Things may be done that seem miraculous simply because we do not understand them. Feats of jugglery are miracles to the simple-minded. The miracles of one age may be the commonplaces of another, science and knowledge having explained what was once incomprehensible and attributed to supernatural agency. So, things that now seem like miracles may yet be explained on natural principles. But in all matters seemingly miraculous in any age, whatever of genuine there may be is sure to become buried up in exaggerations and multiplications as they are reported by amazed witnesses to credulous hearers.

"It is mainly because human evidence is so very uncertain, especially as it gets recorded in times of little scientific knowledge and much superstition, that I consider it absurd to make belief in miracles a test of religious soundness."

## XIII.

### A DISCOURSE ON THE POWER OF PERSONALITY.

I GOT in the way, one while, of putting in an appearance at the midnight conclave somewhat behind time, and I did not always know how the conversation had started. One night the Colonel seemed to have been roused by some sort of reference to equality, or equal rights, or something of the kind, for when I entered the room he was saying in his customary vigorous style, from which I always omit the most forcible expletives:

"This talk about equality is all moonshine. Notwithstanding the consecrated phrase, we know perfectly well that all men are not 'created equal,' but that they come into the world with all manner of inequalities and differences inherent in their constitutions. What one can achieve another cannot, though you give

them the same chance. Put obstacles in the way of one and he will overcome them and carry all before him. Give another a clear track and he will never get anywhere."

"I don't suppose anybody seriously denies so very obvious and commonplace a fact as that, do you?" put in the Judge.

"Not directly, perhaps; but when a conclave of woman's rights persons or labor agitators or Socialistic cranks get to prating about equality they plainly assume that human beings are equal in capacity if they only have the same chance, and that it is circumstances or society or unjust laws that produce differences of condition."

"O well," replied the Judge, "they know better than that, of course, but they talk in extremes for effect. What they are really contending for is equality of opportunities. You know that men with superior capacity and training, especially if they begin with wealth on their side, have an enormous advantage over others, and they are pretty apt to use it

selfishly and get more than their superiority entitles them to. They exercise a large control in industrial affairs, in social affairs, in political affairs, in legislation and administration, and they certainly have used that control to increase their advantage over the less capable. The rich and strong are altogether too apt to use their power and their advantages for their own selfish benefit, producing an inequality of condition out of proportion to the inequality of capacity and of usefulness. It seems to me that one of the highest purposes of Christianity is to correct this wrong and induce those who have many talents to use them for the general good and for the relief of those who have few."

"Now, let us not talk Christianity or church to-night," the Colonel interjected; "stick to the text. My notion is that inequality among men is about the most striking fact in life and the most important to human progress."

"No doubt of that whatever," responded the Judge. "A wise philosopher has remarked that a minority of one

may be in the right, and I say that in the inequality of men one person may weigh more than all the rest of his day and generation put together. He may include in his single personality all the essential qualities and powers of all the brains and character extant, and by virtue of that fact may exert more influence in his time than all other living men put together. Put this one man in the scale against all the rest and he will tip the beam, and if circumstances are favorable he may gain an ascendency over a people which they cannot resist, and its effect may last for ages.

"We often notice the vast variety of feature and expression that may appear within the small limits of the human face. There is at least an equal variation within the narrow limits of the ordinary human character. Assuming that there is a certain aggregate of powers and qualities belonging to that character, they vary immensely in the proportion and combination of details, but they do not get beyond certain limits. One is in part a repetition of another, a little stronger

here and a little weaker there, and all the mental power and moral qualities of a million men are no more in quantity, perhaps, than those of some one man among them. The man's mind may be a sort of composite photograph of all the other minds, and there might be a man of genius the perimeter of whose intellect would include all and more than all that was in the brains of the rest of the race. To be sure, genius is apt to be greatness on one side only of human character, but it might be so comprehensive as to take in all sides.

"After all, the difference among men is within small limits. A few more ounces of brain of finer quality, a slightly different combination of elements constituting the force of temperament, and a man may rise over the heads of the multitude and lead it whither he will. He comprehends all that others comprehend, and more, too. He sees all that they see and what lies beyond their vision as well. He becomes like a mighty schoolmaster among his boys, leading and directing them because he is greater and wiser than

they. I don't much like the word genius, but I suppose it means simply the superiority that comes from endowment beyond the normal standard. A man of special genius may be a great astronomer or poet, or inventor, or soldier, his mind bulging over the normal line in one direction; a man of universal genius would be a Gulliver among the Lilliputians.

"This power of personality, noticeable in small ways all about us, in the force of individual attraction and repulsion, when it appears on a large scale accounts for much in human history and progress. Its influence is modified or limited by its qualities and by circumstances, but the personality of one man may have most astounding effects. It may found a nation or save it from destruction, and change the course of a people's history. It may give one man an ascendency which all hostile forces cannot break. Call it Divine Providence or call it evolution—and I do not see why the two may not be the same thing—but how many times has the stress of circumstances brought forth the man for some great

emergency, and through him solved the problem into which human affairs had become tangled! Moses and David, Alexander and Cæsar, Cromwell and Bonaparte, Washington and Lincoln, what do not these names signify as to the size of the factor in human affairs that may be expressed in the personality of one man! It may be the factor without which the problem were insoluble for the time being, and without which its solution would call for other processes and produce different results to the world

"And wonderful it is, the ascendency which a single personality may gain over the minds of men in its own time and the times thereafter. In a small way it is shown in the devotion of soldiers to some strong and generous commander, in the complete subserviency of followers to some popular leader, and occasionally in the command which a teacher like Arnold or a preacher like Wesley acquires over a large body of disciples who spread the influence of his personality far and wide. On a larger scale it appears in the case of great statesmen or military

leaders, and when the two characters are combined in one person the ascendency that he may acquire over a patriotic people is extraordinary, as you know. You have only to think of Cromwell, of Frederick the Great, of Bonaparte, and of what they were in the history of their time, to realize how large a factor one man of superior powers may be in the computations of life. What would not the French people do for Bonaparte when he was alive? and what effects did his prestige have upon the nation long after his great brain was dust!

"But I deem the most powerful quality of all, combined of course with others on a heroic scale, to be personal disinterestedness or unselfishness. Nothing in the long run so commands the homage of mankind. Neither Washington nor Lincoln was a man of great genius in war or statecraft, though they had powers that served the occasion in that respect; and the esteem in which they are held is due more to a belief in their unselfish patriotism, their devotion to the cause of their country, than to admiration for

great intellectual power. Such men speedily become idealized in the public mind; their defects disappear, their faults become unknown or disbelieved in, and their strong qualities are more or less magnified, especially when death has silenced detraction. I suppose the one flawless idol of this land is Washington, and the worship of what he represents is a great conservative influence.

"But the power and prestige of a great military commander or statesman, even when his course is not marred by selfish ambition, are small in comparison with those of really great moral and religious teachers and leaders. There have been few such of extraordinary greatness in all the world's history, but they stand conspicuous above all others in the lasting influence they have exerted and the exalted position to which they have been raised in the estimation of mankind. Let really great human genius take the form of insight into man's nature and relations, let it deal with the unsearchable mysteries of life and lift the curtains of birth and death, between which love and

hate, hope and despair, play their thrilling dramas, and it will speedily become deified. Admiration and wonder are not sufficient homage for that kind of genius. It commands worship.

"Consider the power and influence of Confucius, who taught deep truths, not for his own benefit, but for those of his people and race, and who gathered disciples and followers in his lifetime from whom his teachings were spread through the most populous empire of the world and sent down to after generations. He illustrates the force of a personality great on the side of moral and ethical wisdom.

"Zoroaster lived before the Hebrew prophets and established a religious system from which organized Christianity has derived far more in past times than from Judaism. The notion of two great Powers, those of good and evil, contending for the soul of man, for its salvation or destruction, together with the notion of good and evil spirits, angels and devils, in the service of these powers, had its origin in the Zoroastrian system. Both the ethical and spiritual aspects of that

system were loftier than anything taught by Moses or the prophets. The Hebrews got some inkling of them at the time of the Persian captivity and after; and they were wrought somewhat into the Judaïstic theology of the post-canonical period, and still more into the development of the Christian system. Zoroaster's life and teachings are enveloped in myths and miracles, but their effects in the world are beyond calculation.

"Most wonderful of all illustrations of the power of personality—save one perhaps—is that of Siddhartha Gautama. By his life and teachings he commanded the devotion of a large body of followers before his death and furnished the basis of a religious and moral system which won the submission of a larger portion of the human race than any other that ever existed, and that, too, among a people of acute intellect and high civilization. In purely ethical teaching he stands almost without a peer in human history. His power over the minds of men was largely due to self-sacrifice and a disinterested devotion to the well-being of the human

race. His gospel was proclaimed as a gospel of salvation from sin five centuries before Christianity. The essence of his teaching was the subduing of evil and the cultivation of good, the purification of life culminating in universal charity. Nothing could be loftier so far as mundane existence is concerned.

"Through his character and teaching Gautama attained his wonderful ascendency, which grew and expanded after his death. But his followers had the irresistible human tendency—the human necessity, I might say—of organizing mystic doctrines and ceremonies and observances out of his simple but profound teachings, and the Buddhist religion of after times had only its roots in the gospel of the great Buddha. It was no long interval after Gautama's death that his birth and life and departure became enveloped in legends and miracles, as was inevitable. He was born without an earthly father—a favorite explanation in early times of purity of character—and was wise and sinless from his birth. Angels ministered to him and wise men sought him out in

his infancy and prophesied his greatness and goodness. An aged priest predicted that he was to lead the world to salvation. His footsteps were attended by miracles, and the cremation of his body was accompanied by supernatural manifestations. Belief in these things entered into the religion of his followers.

"There have been other great teachers who have led men by a hold upon their deepest sentiments, and by a sublime confidence in asserting their mastery over the mystery of life and death, and they afford the very highest illustration of the power which a single personality may gain by possessing the greatness of genius on the moral and spiritual side of man's nature. Inequality among men! Why, the face of human nature is as unequal as the face of the earth, with its general level and with its depressions and dark caverns, and its elevations and lofty heights!"

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This did not turn out to be much of a conversation or discussion. The Judge fell into a continuous discourse, and no-

body cared to interrupt him until he had got through, and then nobody seemed to have anything to say. As Tom and I went out together, I interrupted his meditations by asking:

"What do you suppose the Judge is driving at in these last two talks of his?"

"O, nothing in particular, I fancy," was the reply. "The Colonel started the subjects and the Judge drifted off in quite a characteristic way."

## XIV.

### TOM GETS LIGHT ON THE BEARING OF PREVIOUS REMARKS.

ONE Saturday night I had made one of my rare visits to Tom Benedict's fireside, and we walked down to the club together. It had seemed to me as though Tom had been imprudently taking his wife into his confidence in the matter of the discussions of the "Owls." She had an uneasy, half-anxious way about her that was not usual, and I felt more constraint in her presence than before, though I never could get on any sort of easy terms with the too-angelic creature. She said nothing to betray her anxiety, but I could see that she really wished that Tom would not go out, and half resented my presence as an obstacle to her saying so. When we were on the street Tom said:

"I have been thinking a good deal

about the application of those last two talks, and of course I see the drift of them, but I am really interested to hear Judge Truman carry out his ideas to the conclusion on the religious question. Do you suppose he will take the subject up again to night?"

"I don't believe he will," I replied, "unless somebody else starts it or invites a continuation of the discussion. He is a man who seems to be full of ideas which he is just as willing to keep to himself as to express, unless somebody shows a desire to hear them. He is as likely to talk about Arctic exploration or the stock market as anything else, if nobody indicates a preference."

"Well, I believe I will try to start him on the old track, for my mind is full of the subject," said Tom, "and as I cannot get it out of my head I may as well go on to some kind of satisfactory stopping place with it."

"I am afraid you won't reach it," I replied, "but you may be carried far enough to worry along alone, and find rest for yourself as best you may."

We completed the walk in silence, and found the Judge and the Colonel in what we had come to regard as a sanctum of our own for the late hours of Saturday night, quietly conversing upon their exclusive and inexhaustible stock of common interests.

"Well," exclaimed the Judge in his cheery way, "you old fellows are getting averse to meeting before midnight, while we youngsters would like to break up without encroaching too much upon the Sunday. I hope you haven't lost any friends, Tom; you are looking a bit gloomy."

"O, no; not gloomy, I hope, only serious," Tom responded. "I have been thinking a good deal of late and studying some, and perhaps it doesn't agree with me. Do you know, I have spent all my spare time for the last two or three weeks reading the Old Testament in the light of what you were saying to us about it, and I must confess that I am inclined to take a different view of it; but really I do not see that it makes much difference with the Christian faith. I do not find

that after all it depends very much upon anything in the Hebrew Scripture, except perhaps the Ten Commandments."

"Why make that exception?" queried the Judge. "They were a sort of solemn and impressive formulation of the most essential principles of the old law. The first four had reference to the exclusive worship of Jehovah and the observances that were to guard against the idolatries of Moab and Edom and the rest, and the others embody certain ethical principles common to all people and all time, recognized as soon as there is civilization enough to demand protection for society. A purely secular moral standard now would include all there is in them, and more too. The Christian faith can hardly be independent of anything in the shape of truth and sound principle, but it is not dependent on any particular statement of them in past ages."

"What most troubles me, though," exclaimed the anxious Thomas, "is the effect upon the New Testament of giving up the sacredness of the Old as a revelation of the Divine will."

"That is a mere matter of words," replied the Judge. "'Sacredness,' 'revelation,' 'Divine will,'—what do they mean? Is not the Divine will revealed in all human experience and knowledge and in human thought and reason as well? and is it not as sacred in one place and time as another? What the Hebrew Scriptures really are and mean cannot be changed by any juggle of words, and the results of historical and scientific criticism will have to be accepted. It is useless trying to resist it. But the anxiety you express is the common one. There would not be much clinging to the idea of peculiar sacredness or of special inspiration in the Old Testament if it were not for fears on account of the New. Give up the idea in the one case and you cannot hold on to it in the other, and good people think they must have it in order to retain belief in what they have been taught to believe and what they still wish to believe.

"They are quite right about that, but they overrate the importance of the dogmas in which they believe, either to moral conduct or a religious life in the

highest and best sense. The life, character, and teachings of Jesus in their purity are all there is essential, it seems to me, to a Christian religion adapted as much to these times as any other; and these cannot be obliterated from history. The more clearly they can be brought out from the record and the more exclusively they can be made the basis of preaching and organized religious work, the more effectual they will be for the regeneration of mankind. They have become so involved in mysticisms and dogmatisms, and covered over with such an accumulation of creeds and doctrines, that what ought to attract has come to repel the very people who most need the benefit of religious faith."

"Then you would treat the New Testament record in the same critical spirit as the Old?" Tom asked, as if he could possibly have thought otherwise.

"Why, of course, or any other record! Why not? You doubtless think that you must retain the theory of Divine inspiration in order to retain your belief in the miraculous, and that you must hold

to that belief in order to have any bottom for faith or confidence in the truth of religion. I do not think so. But whatever you think, if you really make a critical study of this record, you cannot avoid the conclusion that it has all the defects and imperfections of a human work, based upon the uncertainties of human testimony under circumstances that made it exceptionally uncertain, and I do not see how you are going to escape the logical deductions from that conclusion.

"Now, look here, Tom! I do not care at all to expatiate on this subject unless you wish it; but if I do, of course I shall say just what I think, and I hope I have made it plain that I believe in the necessity of religious faith and worship for mankind and of the immense value and importance of the Christian Church. What I contend for here in the privacy of our circle is that the Church, in order to maintain its great influence and power for good and do the work which most needs to be done, absolutely must range itself in line with modern progress in knowledge and thought. It cannot re-

tain an effectual hold upon the convictions of men by requiring them to believe what the most honest and serious of students and thinkers cannot believe and the ordinary every-day common sense of the people will reject.

"You know there has been a good deal of critical study of the New Testament literature in recent years, and it yields readily to the same tests as are universally accepted for all other human records, and honesty requires us to accept the results. Really very little study is necessary to verify them. I don't want to make myself tiresome by talking about the political, social, and literary conditions under which that record was produced, but I suppose you know this: Christianity as a system was founded, though not fully organized, a generation after Jesus finished his teaching, by Paul and the apostles. Their work was carried forward by the so-called 'Fathers of the Church,' whose writings were not made canonical, as those of the first Christian writers were. Paul was the father of Christian dogma, and it was multiplied

and extended by his successors; and why have not the religious leaders of to-day as much right to modify it as they had?

"You must remember that the letters of Paul and the apostles were in all probability written before the Gospels. These men founded the Christian system, not simply on the life and teachings of Jesus, but still more on his birth and death, which they used as a means of introducing that mysticism which in those times seemed to be a necessity of religion. It was after this had been done, after the Messianic idea had been modified and accepted and the prophecies had been interpreted to support it, after the idea of the miraculous birth, the sacrificial meaning of the Last Supper, the crucifixion, and the resurrection, had been adopted and wrought into the texture of the new faith —and perhaps a hundred years and more after the actual events—that the Gospel record was made up in permanent written form. And even what that was we do not know: for the oldest claim for any manuscript of any of the books dates it in the

early part of the fourth century after Christ; and the most ancient of these bear many evidences of errors in copying, and subsequent changes and corrections. What is the natural and inevitable consequence? Actual written records were imperfect and fragmentary, made up from the memory of different persons; oral tradition was dim and distorted, and the doctrines already promulgated and accepted necessarily affected the writers and colored the narrative. Compare the four different records as we have them now, in English translations from varying Greek manuscripts, and see if they do not bear all the marks of human production. They are not consistent with each other in details. The same events are related with material variations; they are differently connected and assigned to different times, places, and situations, and conspicuous and well-remembered teachings and sayings are put in with no sort of agreement as to the occasions that brought them out. This does not impugn the practical authenticity or good faith or immortal value of the writings, but it gives

them a very human character, does it not?"

There was a slight pause here, and the perturbation of the devout Thomas was plainly visible. He seemed to be trying to get his shattered ideas together for some kind of protest or reply, but the Judge, noticing that he was bewildered and would not do himself justice kindly relieved him of all occasion for saying anything by proceeding.

"I know, my dear boy, that this view is shocking to you, although it is not new to scholars, many of them earnest Christians, too. I only wish I could get you to regard it as really in the interest of the highest religion and the purest Christianity, and I think you may come to that sometime if you study it out. I know what is at the bottom of your troubled mind,—the miracles and all that they are supposed to sanction and to sanctify. Well, you must see by this time that I think too much importance is attached to belief in them. I do not accept them as miracles, of course, but I do not pretend to say just how much

of fact the stories may have sprung from.

"You must remember what we were saying about the value of human testimony, especially when it relates to mysterious phenomena which people do not understand, and to that border-land of human experience which has so long baffled psychological inquiry. Get it on record through the oral traditions of a hundred years in an uncritical time, and it becomes impossible to sift it down to facts. You know also that we admitted that there is or may be much of reality of some kind—not supernatural, but belonging to the unexplored realm of the natural—in all this clairvoyant, spiritual-medium, faith-cure, hypnotism, personal magnetism business; in short, that some personalities peculiarly endowed have a marvellous ascendency over others and produce strange effects. I can easily imagine that this wonderfully constituted and endowed teacher of humanity who came out of Nazareth had such a command over the faith of the simple and devout souls of the time as to produce

very remarkable effects upon those afflicted with many of the infirmities that flesh is heir to. Do we not occasionally hear of similar cures and similar control over conduct even nowadays? All that was real in what came to be known as the miracles may be accounted for by natural forces and influences, not much understood even now, and not at all at that time. That the reports of them should become magnified and distorted was simply inevitable; and that they were so is certain.

"As a test of the record of these things, let me ask: Do you suppose that any man of sense really believes that insane or epileptic or cataleptic or any other persons are or ever were possessed by demons who could be driven out of them and made to enter a herd of hogs? For my part, I cannot be made to believe that any person actually dead was ever brought back to life, though I do not marvel at all that there should have been reports and stories of such things. Does it ever strike you as significant that the most remarkable of the alleged miracles,

the raising of Lazarus, is mentioned only in the latest and most doctrinized of the Gospels? Would such an amazing exhibition have escaped the knowledge and memory of the earlier evangelists, those who were nearest to the events and may have derived their knowledge directly or indirectly from eye- and ear-witnesses? But the fourth Gospel differs from the others to such an extent as to seem like a record of different events and different personages. The inconsistencies are irreconcilable and to be explained only on the theory that the latest book was written to support the doctrines and interpretations that had by that time been established by the founders of the Church; or at all events that it was tinged—no, stained and dyed throughout—by the intense doctrinal mysticism of its author, whether that was the "Apostle John," or the "Presbyter John," or whoever it was.

"Now I want you clearly to understand my position on this matter. It is simply that of freedom of study, freedom of thought, and freedom of belief. I do not object to others believing in the mirac-

ulous and the supernatural, if they can honestly do so, and if it affords the most satisfactory solution of the problem for them. I object only to such a belief being required, being obligatory, in order that a person may be admitted to Christian fellowship; for honest and devout minds must differ, and some of them cannot avoid what I and many others regard as rational conclusions. As I have said more than once, the ordinary intelligence, the every-day common sense, of people is pretty sure to respond nowadays to the conclusions of science and reason, to accord with them in a rough way; and people cannot be won to better lives by imposing upon them conditions of belief which they cannot and will not accept. If the churches would broaden their limits by letting ancient dogmas go and giving liberty to honesty of belief and of doubt, they could maintain as high a standard of moral purity and integrity, as lofty a form of a worship and as spiritual a view of religion—aye, more so—and greatly increase their power and influence for good.

"But I am talking too long and having it too much to myself. I wish the rest of you would interrupt and stop me more, and have your own say about these things. Suppose we wind up the whole subject next time with a symposium in which each shall express his particular view; for in two weeks from this night I expect to be on the ocean, bound for a stay of some months abroad."

"Count me out!" ejaculated the Colonel, who had sat grim and silent throughout. "The whole thing wearies me to death. I am glad you speak of winding up next time, so far as this subject is concerned, but I am sorry you are going abroad, though I suppose I shall be off somewhere myself pretty soon."

"But you must help wind up, for I particularly wish to hear what you will say after thinking the matter over," responded the Judge.

"All right; if I find I can think it over, I will, and let you know the result. And Tom will come around with the latest and most approved weapons of orthodoxy.

And our silent friend, here, I hope we may hear from him."

"No, I thank you," I replied. "Having no 'views' to present, I prefer to be the audience, making up in attention for lack of numbers. *Silent* and *listen* are anagrams, and I will be the silent Listener."

## XV.

### THE COLONEL MAINTAINS THE USEFULNESS OF DELUSION.

THAT "symposium" suggested by the Judge came off duly on the following Saturday night, and was quite an occasion. It prolonged the session of the "Owls" until near three o'clock of Sunday morning, and I was unable to get the most condensed statement of what was said into one installment of my reports. I could hardly cover the ground of one speaker within the proper limits, but I did not sleep until I got the whole thing on paper, fearing lest it evaporate from my memory and the notes I had been making all the morning should become undecipherable.

There was an unusual air of formality about the gathering, the effect of a preannounced programme, which prevented something of the free-and-easy spirit that

had been the chief charm of the previous talks. This having the thing in mind beforehand and thinking it over seemed to impart a gravity to the occasion, which would have spoiled it but for the anticipation that once for all each was to have his say on a momentous matter which all the previous desultory conversations had almost unconsciously led up to. It was to be disposed of and got out of the way, and then the conclave was to break up for the summer.

"Well, Colonel," said the Judge in the brisk tone of a master of ceremonies after we had got comfortably settled down, "I have no doubt you concluded to think over the matter we were talking about a week ago and have got something to say worth listening to."

"The matter *you* were talking about, you mean," replied the Colonel, with a glare in his blue eyes. "You know I have no taste for this sort of discussion, but I have decided for once to let out on it, and I am going to astonish you by taking up the orthodox side."

"Nothing will astonish me," rejoined

the Judge with a sort of suppressed chuckle, "but I will wager that Tom will not accept your advocacy of the orthodox side as satisfactory to him and other devout believers."

"Perhaps not, but I cannot help that; if they will not accept the only ground there is left for them to stand upon I shall leave them to their fate hereafter. You know my personal views well enough, Judge. I accept science and reason, believe what I can find out to be true, and prefer my own judgment to any one's else; and as to the Deity, the immortality of the soul, a future life, and all that sort of thing, I simply say I don't know anything about it, can't find out anything about it, and don't believe anybody else can. *But*—"

This last word was spoken with portentous emphasis and was followed by a long pause, and then the Colonel set forth upon a discourse which he had evidently thought out with some care:

"What difference does it make if the beliefs which it is so easy to criticise and pick to pieces are founded in delusion?

They may be just as necessary to restrain and to sustain poor human nature as if they were based upon demonstrated and everlasting truth. I am inclined to think that delusion may serve a very useful purpose, and that it is hardly safe to be in a hurry to dispel it. It may serve in the place of props and scaffolding in the slow process of building the moral fabric of the human race until it can stand firmly on the basis of knowledge, or rather of wisdom, and it is never safe to knock out your props and take down your scaffoldings until the building is complete.

"You admit that while the system of Moses was crude and more or less barbarous it was adapted to the condition of the people for whom it was intended and was a good thing for them. The same is true of any system at a given time and place. It is the product of the people's needs, the best result of such teaching as they are capable of. It is not what a perfected human race would have; but the human race is not yet perfected, and these things are processes and means

in its development, and not at all final results.

"I believe the religion of this day or any other day is just as good as the people can benefit by, and if there is superstition in it, or if it is founded in delusion, that is a part of the necessity of the case. People can believe in a delusion with just as much enthusiasm as in a truth; and more, too, for enthusiasm is a matter of feeling and not of intellect. No person would be willing to die for a scientific fact or a truth in philosophy, but many people have died for their faith in sheer delusion. Even Tom will admit it in the case of heathen, who suffer and die for their superstitions with all the heroism of Christian martyrs. He must also admit it in the case of some Christian martyrs when he remembers that the persecuted heretics of one place or time are the true believers of another, and that men have died with equal stoicism in support of propositions that were contradictory of each other. It always seemed absurd to me to take the willingness of men to die for their faith as an

evidence of its soundness. Faith sustained by delusion is just as strong and will produce as much confidence and exaltation of feeling, as much hope and assurance of blessedness, as that sustained by the deepest philosophy.

"It is all very well for you and me to say that we can go safely through life doing our duty by ourselves and others, and confident enough as to any future destiny, without accepting the present doctrines of so-called religion. Perhaps we can, and perhaps a small fraction of mankind are safe enough with nothing but science and philosophy to guide them, but it is not so with the great mass. They do not know, they do not think, they do not reason to sound conclusions, and they must believe or they are lost. Men who are beset with passionate impulses that carry them into vices and crimes, who cannot see that these mean destruction for themselves, and who lack the strength to resist them even if they did appreciate their peril—what is the use in telling such men that they will be happier and better off if they

will do right and be good? You cannot, with all the science and philosophy extant, hold them from going down. They must have something that will take hold of their hopes and fears with a mighty grip.

"Poor humanity, with its tendency to sink into the beast, must believe in order to be saved. It must have the strongest kind of motives presented in order to struggle successfully against depravity. It must believe in most definite and tangible rewards and punishments. It must have a heaven to hope for and a hell to shrink from, and these must be positive, concrete things, and not barren abstractions or vague possibilities. Heaven and hell were useful inventions, and we cannot get on without them. We must still bribe and scare people to salvation or they will go to destruction. I mean salvation and destruction in this world, in a social, moral and political sense. Argue, if you please, that belief in a heaven and hell hereafter is founded in delusion pure and simple, but it is no less necessary as a restraining influence

on that account. And I think the doctrines that inspire awe, excite hopes and fears, and impress people in a way to make them submit to authority, serve a useful and necessary purpose, whether they rest upon absolute truth or not.

"I could never think that educated Catholic priests had any real belief in the forms and ceremonies of their Church, but I suppose they see how effective these are in bringing the ignorant and superstitious, those in whom feeling is more potent than reason, into submission and control, and they use the system for that purpose. It is a good thing they do, for the lawless elements would be more lawless, the tendency to socialism, anarchy, and a general 'dissolution and thaw' of society, would be stronger but for this restraint. I conceive that the ritualistic churches—the Roman and the Anglican—have done a great thing in conserving the *sentiment* of religion; the Protestant churches generally have gone off after intellectual barrenness of dogmatism and so have less control over their

followers. There is less of religious restraint in other churches than the Roman, at least, partly because their field is among people who need it less; but they need a good deal of it, all the same.

"And to get the restraint and the incentive to effort that are necessary, I tell you, people must believe, not think; especially those whose thinking capacity is small. Your critical and philosophic view of revelation is of no use to them. A God of the universe who is a deduction from nature and science, a future state that is a possible inference from philosophy, are not enough. They must have a God with positive attributes, with a direct interest in their lives, upon whom they feel themselves absolutely dependent, and he must be revealed so that there can be no question about it. The future state of happiness or misery must be a reality and not a deduction or an inference, and hence only a possibility; and to be a reality it must have been revealed and made known with authority. All this may be delusion, but

what if it is? It is just as necessary and just as effective for all that.

"Certainty is what men in this world want, not doubt; and they can get it only by unquestioning faith in some authority. Take away the anchorage for that and they are adrift, on a perilous sea without pilot or compass and with no guide but the stars, which they do not understand.

"Not only is this positive belief, this unquestioning faith, which nothing but the acceptance of Divine Providence and Divine revelation can sustain, necessary to enable people to strive against the evil tendencies of their nature and to overcome them, but it is necessary to give them hope and comfort in the trials of life. What satisfaction can science and philosophy, with their doubtful inferences, afford to that large portion of the human race that must spend their days in toil and hardship and privation, and are beset with misfortunes and losses? They work on year after year with little ease or comfort; they lose even the opportunity to earn bread at times. They see

their families in poverty, sometimes in suffering and misery; they are subject to sickness, and death comes at intervals to try their souls. In this little span of life what are their compensations and where is their hope of compensation? By all means, teach them that there is a God, who is not merely a remote and incomprehensible abstraction, but a personal Father to them all. Let them believe that he is watching over them and taking note of their sufferings and hardships, that he credits them with their efforts to do right and to bear their burdens with cheerful resignation, and that in his own good time he will take them from this vale of tears to an exceeding great reward, which will more than make up for all they have borne.

"Religious faith is necessary to sustain the poor and the heavy-laden, to inspire them to efforts that shall keep them from giving way to moral degeneration and enable them to be virtuous, honest, and upright, and that shall save them from despondency and desperation. And they are not the only ones that

need it. Others meet with misfortune and bereavement, and need the support and consolation of a confident dependence upon a higher Power; they need it to sustain and comfort them in trial and affliction and they need it to aid them in maintaining their integrity of character in spite of the buffets of the world. Take away their faith, and why should they not commit suicide or plunge into gratifications of passion that will lead to speedy death?

"You cannot get high enough in the scale of intelligence or of worldly success to escape the need of this kind of faith as a restraining influence. The besetting weakness of all mankind is Selfishness, and it leads to a multitude of wrongs and iniquities. Prosperity is selfish, wealth is selfish, success is selfish, business is selfish, politics is selfish, and at the bottom of all man's inhumanity to man is selfishness. It leads to indulgence and excess, and it leads to injustice and injury to others. It is at the bottom of the moral evils that afflict society. Knowledge and philosophy may be the antidote of

this for the few, but not for the many. They need to be impressed with the idea that this life is as nothing compared to the life to come, and that by their selfish course they are laying up wrath against the day of wrath, that they are incurring the displeasure of the Almighty, and that the Lazarus whom they turn from their gates will repose in Abraham's bosom when they are suffering the torments which their wrong-doing deserves.

"I tell you, the men of this world, to escape moral degradation and social death and the disasters to society that must come from the prevalence of the evil tendencies of human nature, must believe in a personal Deity who takes an interest in their doings and will call them to an account. They must believe in a state of rewards and punishments compared with which all the gains and losses of this world are as dust in the balance. They must be impressed with this belief so that it will have a vital power over their lives. On what shall it rest? You cannot base it on science and reason. It must rest upon revelation, and a revela-

tion that is authoritative and inspired, for no other can preclude doubt.

"So you see that, although I do not personally accept anything that the word 'faith' implies, I think the churches are right in basing their teachings upon it and holding to doctrines that are necessary to support it.

"Neither do I deplore the division into sects. The Roman Catholic system is wonderfully adapted to its purposes, and reaches the souls of men upon whom rational preaching would be lost. But beyond a certain line in the combination of ignorance and knowledge, of superstition and reason, of emotion and thought, that make up the human character, it loses its hold, and other systems of belief are better adapted to the work of Christianity. So far as people are allowed to think and to judge they come to disagree and to divide, and there are sects adapted to the wants and needs of different natures. So much the better! All are provided for. Nor do I care if some in the churches, even of their ministers, do not really believe all that they profess,

in continuing to accept the traditional creeds. They may see the value, even the necessity, of beliefs which in their own minds they cannot fully accept, and they may be convinced that they can act more effectively in the great work of saving sinners—to use a cant phrase of theirs—by not disturbing these beliefs. Devout freethinkers like you, Judge, and undevout, but self-confident, unbelievers like me, are at liberty to take our own way, and why should we meddle or make with the churches or the religious systems that the state of the world and of mankind makes necessary? Let them alone, I say!"

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Fully conscious that I have been unable to preserve characteristic phraseology and personal flavor of the Colonel's discourse, I yet think I have its substance all right. When he had finished and was lighting a cigar, with a manner denoting immense relief, the Judge turned to Tom and said, "Well, my boy, are you satisfied with that as a defence of the position of the Church?"

"No, sir," was Tom Benedict's prompt reply.

But, as I said at the start, this talk was too long to be reported in one statement, and we shall have to defer Tom's remarks to another chapter.

## XVI.

### TOM BENEDICT AS A DEFENDER OF THE FAITH.

"THE objection I have to the Colonel's position," Tom proceeded, "is that it presents a total lack of sincerity and good faith as the basis of what you might call a policy for the Church and for religious teachers. It is founded on the Jesuitical maxim that the end justifies the means, and it would use systematic deception as a means of keeping people on their good behavior. It is like the wicked old practise of scaring children with bogy stories to make them obedient, and promising them impossible things if they will be good. It is calculated to promote hypocrisy and demoralize society rather than keep it under restraint. I mean, of course, if the theory of delusion were to be admitted and acted on. I do not think that any one

who does not in substance honestly accept the doctrines of the Church can be justified in subscribing to them, much less in teaching them.

"I agree with the Colonel that faith and belief are necessary; they are and must be, it seems to me, the very basis of all real religion: but my ground is that they must be founded not upon delusion but upon Divine revelation, which may be differently understood and interpreted at different times and places, but is in substance ever the same. I know that I am myself conscious of the need of a belief in a Deity who is something more than an abstraction. I do not suppose that I am weaker or more prone to evil than most men, but I find it hard enough to pursue the course in all the relations of life which I know to be right, and I am sure I should come very far short of it without my belief in the Father of us all, who has laid his commands upon us and watches over our conduct, who will help us if we call upon him, who will call us to account if we are wayward and consciously erring, and who

will reward and punish in another life according to our deeds in this. There would be no support in such a belief if it were not confidently based upon actual revelation. In fact, it cannot rest without such a basis, it seems to me.

"But my faith does not proceed from study and reason, though I admit that to be sound it must be consistent with the final results of knowledge—that is, truth. Yet it seems to me that there is more in the nature of man than body and intellect, and that the intuitions of the soul and the consciousness of the spirit may be as convincing as the processes of the reason, and even more so, for they may come nearer to absolute conclusions. It is the consciousness of a spiritual being within me, of spiritual needs and of spiritual relationships, that is the real bottom of my faith, and the purest and most exalted natures have had this consciousness in the highest degree. I take their teachings, drawn from the intuitions of spiritual insight, as being just as authoritative in their way as the teachings of great students and thinkers are in mat-

ters of science and material philosophy. The spiritual teachers too, deal with truth, and are nearer to its source than scientists and philosophers.

"Starting with this consciousness of the spiritual nature of the soul, and its needs and relationships, and accepting the teachings in regard to it of those who have had the deepest and loftiest conceptions of that side of man's nature and life, it is a natural and, it seems to me, a necessary inference that we have a destiny above and beyond this life. You cannot prove it from scientific knowledge and reasoning, but convictions that spring from the spiritual side may be founded in deeper truth than science and philosophy have yet reached. Indeed, the keenest reasoning of the old philosophers, like Plato and Socrates, tended to the same conclusions. If we are made for another and a higher life than this, then we must have a Maker who had designs in creating us and in preparing the human race for its destiny, and we are justified in believing in his infinite power and wisdom and goodness and in his absolute

righteousness, though none of us is capable of fully understanding his designs and the methods by which they are wrought out. We have ground enough for faith and for accepting those teachings which tell us that God is our Father, that he watches over us and directs the course of things in a way that is righteous altogether and that his providence is over every person, over the whole race and over the universe. My belief in that does not come from the study of nature and of history, but from the soul and its consciousness, with the aid of spiritual teachings from those who seem to me to have the deepest and closest relation with things spiritual.

"Then, accepting as I do, without any question of what science and reason may teach, this one doctrine of the spiritual life and destiny of man and his relation to a paternal and beneficent Deity,—which seems to me to be quite apart from the province of science and reason,—all the rest seems easy enough. That is, it seems natural and rational that there should have been a progressive revela-

tion to man of his relation to the Creator, his duties in this life, and his final destiny. No doubt the understanding of the revelation was imperfect when it was made and is imperfect yet, and the task was imposed upon the race of working out its own salvation. I cannot see that it is inconsistent with any scientific theory of evolution and development, that the processes of creation and of the perfection of the human race should have been ordained by such a Deity as Christians believe in, and that he should, in the course of human development, have made revelations of himself to men in such ways as they were ready to apprehend. When, according to his plan of perfecting the race, it had reached a certain stage of development, why should he not select a people in which to plant and nourish the germs of a true conception of himself and of sound principles of conduct? It was a part of the Divine scheme that the race should grow and struggle forward and upward.

"It is a petty notion that an all-wise and beneficent God would of necessity make

the race perfect all at once and keep it in a state of Elysian happiness; that, having brought it into being on the face of the earth amid the elemental forces, he should preserve it from calamity, implant in it only tendencies to good and to happiness, and make a full and unmistakable revelation of himself at once. The actual plan, so far as we can understand it, seems to me much more divine. Why, then, in the course of human development should not the beginnings of revelation have been made to the founders of Israel, carried further through the Egyptian bondage and deliverance, expanded and exalted through the history of the Kings and the teachings of the prophets, and finally, through the contact of Israel with other nations and the dispersion of the tribes, have prepared the way for the fuller revelation to all the world made through the Saviour?

"It does not seem to me irrational to believe that this process of development of religious ideas, to which other nations than the Hebrews made contributions and which culminated in Christianity,

was in the strictest sense a process of Divine revelation. That the prevailing conceptions from time to time had the crudity belonging to the stage of intellectual and moral progress of the people does not derogate from this theory, it seems to me. Revelation was made so far as man was prepared for it, and the result had the imperfections of his capacities and was subject to the misconceptions to which the existing stage of human progress made it liable. The record in which this revelation is embodied and preserved has the characteristics of the people, through whom and by whom that record was made, and of the state of intellectual and moral progress which they had attained. Notions that have been held sometimes and by some people as to inspiration may not be sound; but that God in his infinite wisdom and providence made the revelation of his will through a people chosen for the purpose, working it out in their experience and causing it to be preserved in their records and literature, does not seem to me to be an unreasonable thing to believe, and

it does seem to me to be well supported by evidence and argument. I can regard this revelation and this record as Divine and authoritative so far as they go, notwithstanding any imperfection in the teachings and conduct and writings of the people through whom the process was wrought out. I am not to expect the scientific knowledge, the moral and social advancement, or the philosophic spirit that came ages later on in the development of humanity.

"It seems to me clear that the world had been prepared not only by the experience of the Jews and the share of Divine revelation made through them, but by developments among other peoples, for the great revelation that came in the person of Jesus Christ. It seems to me that God had been slowly—as it appears to our conceptions of time—bringing the world to a condition for this grand step, and then at the right time and in the right way he raised up a Saviour for the race.

"Then, as I accept the theory of a Divine plan and Divine oversight from first

to last, I find no difficulty in accepting what are called miracles. I do not see why, in bringing into the world the teacher whom the world needed and was ready for, who was to stand in all after ages as the type of perfection in human character, who was to have the spiritual insight and wisdom to reveal to men the mystery of this life and give assurance of a life to come, in which good would be rewarded and evil punished, and to demonstrate immortality—I do not see why, I say, God should not have caused this Saviour's birth by the creative power of which we have so many evidences, without an earthly father, why He should not exercise supernatural powers through him to convince the people for all time of his Divine character and mission, and even raise him visibly from the dead to settle all doubts of a life beyond the grave. I believe these things, not simply because the Church teaches them and the record contains them, but to me they seem reasonable and in accordance with a truly Divine method of bringing the human race to salvation and ultimate per-

fection. With such study as I am able to give the matter, it is easier to believe this than not to believe it; and it seems to me to afford a much more satisfactory explanation of religious history than science and philosophical criticism can give.

"With the Christian revelation, following and completing the Hebrew revelation, the human race had a sufficient ground upon which to work out its spiritual problems, and it has been engaged upon this ever since, and will be engaged upon it doubtless for ages to come. It had direct revelation enough to proceed upon safely. This might need continual study. It might be subject to different interpretations and be imperfectly understood; and so it happens that religious teaching and Christian belief, and even forms and manners of worship, have been a matter of progress, and may still be so. But I believe the more progress we make, the more clearly we apprehend the truths of nature, the truths of history, the truths of revelation, and the truth regarding the spiritual nature of man, the more

firmly established will be the basis of faith in the fatherhood of God, the divine character of Christ and his Gospel, and all that is essential in Christian doctrine.

"You will see plainly enough that in studying and thinking for my part in to-night's programme I have been forced a good deal from the ground which I supposed myself to hold; that is, I am compelled to shift somewhat my point of view and take things in a new light. At first, I was much troubled in mind by the bearings of your talks about Scripture, the Church, inspiration, and so forth; but I think the disturbance was a good thing for me, after all, and I feel myself regaining my foothold. My confidence in things which I had accepted as a matter of course without thinking much about them was giving way; but you have enlarged my field of vision, and aroused me to do some thinking on my own account; and while my ideas have been taking a new form, I feel sure that in my own mind they are to be substantially confirmed in the end.

"I accept freely and confidently the idea that God's providence extends and always did extend over all the earth and all its people, and that his revelation appears in all history and all human experience, but that does not prevent me from seeing a special revelation to man through the religion of the ancient Hebrews and the birth, teachings, and death of Jesus, or from regarding the record containing it as divine and therefore sacred. Without regard to theories about inspiration, I think God took care to have the revelation of his will duly made as humanity developed and advanced, and duly recorded and preserved for the perpetual guidance and benefit of the race. After thinking the matter all over, I still find my own faith unshaken."

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At the end of this discourse, which had more spirit and eloquence than I have been able to reproduce, the little company applauded Tom, to the astonishment of loungers in the neighboring room, even the Colonel joining in with a grim smile.

"Well done, my boy!" said the Judge. "I guess we may as well drop the subject now."

"O no, my dear sir," Tom replied, warmly. "You must sum up the conclusion of the whole matter and tell us what you think of the Colonel's views and mine. I am curious to hear what you have to say."

"All right, if you insist upon it. I suppose that was implied in the agreement." And the Judge, after some little delay, undertook to restore his lines so far as they had been deranged.

## XVII.

### THE JUDGE PLEADS FOR UNIVERSAL TOLERATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT.

I CANNOT pretend to give the exact language of the Judge's final discourse in the symposium of "Owls," and it is useless to attempt to convey any adequate idea of his peculiar earnestness of manner. I can only fall back upon the formula of the newspaper reporters and declare, with more truth than sometimes characterizes their assertions, that he spoke "substantially as follows:"

"I do not wish to repeat or to modify any views that I have heretofore expressed. My individual opinions are of no special importance, and what I wish to see is not their acceptance, but a universal toleration of differences of opinion among honest and earnest people, and especially among people of a devout and religious turn, and a general co-op-

eration in the one great purpose of all religion—the elevation and improvement of mankind. That, it seems to me, is the real, the practical meaning of the salvation of men. Men need to be saved from sin—that is, from the evil tendencies of human nature and their own selfish and degrading desires—and raised to higher conceptions of life and better conduct. That is the true work of salvation; and whether it looks beyond this life or not makes no serious difference as to what needs to be done. That which is best for man here below in the highest sense is surely that which will best fit him for any life for which he may be destined. The best that can be done to elevate and purify human character and conduct in this world is the best that can be done to prepare souls for a higher life.

"It seems to me that all religions which rise above gross superstition, and all devout men, are really agreed upon those things that are essential. The nearer they come to truth the more they are in harmony. Differences in belief necessa-

rily indicate distance from truth, varying in direction. Multiplicity of sects only shows how far we are from the common ground of absolute truth: as they approach that ground their differences must diminish; and if they reach it the differences must disappear. Differences of belief that produce so many sects are founded on dogmas and doctrines, and these are only so many indexes of error, or of distance from truth, which is necessarily consistent with itself. But all the lines converge to the central light.

"All believers are wandering in the same misty wilderness with the same type of compass, but with needles deflected all sorts of ways by disturbing influences. The efforts of mankind in their progress are to clear away the mists, to get visible landmarks, and to correct the variations of the compass. Creeds and doctrines have served good purpose as charts in the past, but they should be subject to constant correction. To cling to those of the old explorers just because they are old, is to remain in error. They have been used so long now

that radical corrections are needed. We have learned so much in the past hundred years that to hold to these creeds is like sailing by Mercator's charts.

"For my own part I accept immortality and the life to come, for otherwise I can find no adequate explanation of this life and of the existence of what we mean by the soul in man. I accept the general idea of a beneficent Creator of the universe and Father of mankind, for otherwise I can find no adequate explanation of the existence of the universe and of mankind. There is revelation enough in nature as explored by science, in history as explored by philosophy, and in man himself as explored by reason, to sustain that much of belief for me.

"And that is about all there is essential to any or all religion. The doctrines and dogmas built all over the fundamental basis of religion come from the efforts of men to interpret, to explain and to support their faith, and to bring others to accept it and live by it; and the variations of doctrine are but the measure of the error that is in it. Old

conceptions were crude, old beliefs were necessarily made up largely of ignorance and superstition, because the minds that entertained them had not the means of enlightenment. Ormuzd and Ahriman, the Holy Ghost and the Devil, were the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde of old theologies. To-day the struggle between good and evil needs no personifications. Science has abolished the heaven and hell of Christian mythology, because the blue dome of Olympus has been dissolved into the vast depths of the sky, and geology leaves no place for the mysterious underworld realm of Sheol or of Hades. The region is occupied by elemental fires fed by the ingredients of the earth's crust, and not by departed souls. And yet Oriental tropes and the visions of saints need not petrify for all time our ideas of future existence. The universe has space enough for all the souls that may have animated all the races of its innumerable worlds. How do we know but that on other planets and in other solar systems the problems of life and death may have been carried much nearer their last solu-

tion than we have been able to reach, with our realms of darkness in Africa and Oceanica and our slums in London and New York?

"As to future reward and punishment, *must* not the soul carry that with it wherever it goes? Is happiness or misery a question of place, in this world or any other world?

"I agree with the view that religious faith may be just as earnest and just as efficacious for the time if founded in delusion as if founded in truth; but not if the delusion is conscious. I would not try to keep up delusion knowing it to be such or consciously make use of it even to 'save souls.' Hypocrisy is hateful and can produce no good results. I do not think light is hurtful except to noxious things, or knowledge dangerous to anything but evil. Help people to know and to think, and you lead them toward safety. Any religious system that depends on shutting the mind from light and restraining the action of reason is superstition. It is built not upon bedrock, but upon rotting piles in a sweltering morass.

"My objection to the theory of a special revelation running through the history of one people, imbedded in their literature and revived and embodied in one system of religious belief, is that it does not accord with a wide understanding and a profound view of the facts. Advancing knowledge and searching criticism will not sustain it; and there is loss in contending for an untenable position.

"In a sense, the Jews were a 'chosen people,' just as other races were, because they had a special genius and accomplished a peculiar work. Whether you call it 'Divine Providence' or 'natural selection' makes no difference: the fact remains that, for instance, the Greeks were gifted with a surpassing genius for philosophy and art: the Romans were endowed with an all-embracing power of organized regulation and the compelling of human and material forces to practical ends; and so the Hebrews, in spite of the crudities of their conceptions, had a genius for religion, which enabled them to produce a series of prophets and teachers, uttering

germinal truths that have lived and borne fruit in man's elevation, far beyond those issuing from any other one nation.

"But the truths of religious sentiment are only one part of man's nature, and God has wrought upon man in multifarious ways. The theory of Providence and revelation must needs take in all nature, all history and experience, and all attainable philosophy. Then will it be strengthened by advancing knowledge and exploring reason, and not weakened.

"I do not contend for any restriction upon belief or unbelief. I would not interfere with any form of faith that men find satisfying to their souls. I would merely open wide the temple-doors and proclaim liberty to all the world. I would invite people to search for the truth with all the light the heavens can give. Make Science and Knowledge and Reason the handmaidens of Religion, and give leave to every man to see by the best light he can get. I am confident that the cause of virtue and morality, the cause of man's salvation, will be the

gainer by it, and that the 'kingdom of heaven' will be advanced.

"If the Christian Church could be purged of its 'creeds outworn,' of its fossilized dogmas and its mummified formalisms, if its windows could be opened to the light of the universe, its sects would fuse and coalesce, and there is no reason why it should not draw to itself a great vitalizing force that is now excluded. Let men believe what they must, but do not compel them to believe what they cannot, with the alternative of being excluded from the company of those who are striving together to do better, to be better, and to make the world better, You cannot force them to believe, and to make them pretend to believe 'is not and cannot come to good.' The policy of insisting upon the old doctrines is making hypocrites and not saints. When we see men of sanctified professions serving mammon in business and in public life and belying every requirement of their professed faith, we must conclude that there is no real vitality in their religion. They are bringing deep discredit on what

they call the 'cause of Christ.' Christ would repudiate and denounce them as the Pharisees of this age.

"If we could break down the trammels of antiquated creeds and revive the Jesus of history from the petrifaction of ages to a living reality in the minds of men, there would be a new era in the conquests of religious faith.

"What greater inspiration is needed than the life and teachings and the supreme sacrifice of One absolutely sinless and unselfish Man? It is the ideal of the aspirations of the race. It would be a mighty attraction to all that is best in human nature, a regenerating force for all mankind, while the old exclusive dogmas become more and more repellent as the race advances in enlightenment. By opening wide the doors and throwing down the ancient barriers the best talent, the highest character, and the most earnest zeal could be brought into the Church to aid in the work of redeeming the race from the powers of darkness, whereas now they are largely excluded.

"Moreover, it would be far easier to

reach the hearts of men. They would be asked to know, to reason, and to understand, and could be led to see that purity of life and right action bring their own reward, and mighty influences could be applied to help them in the struggle against the powers of evil within and without. The best part of society would be turned into an educating and elevating force for the worst part, and one day in the week could be devoted to a real work of salvation among men. Three generations of this kind of Christianity, working with all the resources of knowledge and reason and with the ardor of intellectual liberty and moral zeal, would transform the face of human society and give civilization an advance greater than it has known in all the time since the Dark Ages. With the inculcation of a broad charity and a spirit of the genuine brotherhood of man it might abolish all slums and sinks of iniquity, practically exterminate crime and pauperism, and dispel the deep shadows of ignorance and poverty.

"I do not contend for any creeds of

negation, any formal denial of things that have been believed or that men find it necessary to believe. I only plead for liberty of thought and freedom of belief, of honesty in teaching and in preaching, and the discarding of those metes and bounds that antiquated dogmas have set up, which keep out of the great organization of the Christian Church much of the best talent, the best learning, and, in a great degree, the best religious spirit of the age. Many give a formal adhesion to creeds which they do not really believe in, for the sake of not being excluded; but it is a compromise with conscience that savors of hypocrisy. Souls of resolute honesty will not do this, and they are branded as unbelievers, even as infidels, though they be the salt of the earth. As a consequence, 'infidel' is ceasing to be a term of opprobrium, and may become one of honor, while membership in a church ceases to be accepted as a guarantee of good character. Let us not forget that Jesus was hounded to death by the religious leaders of the Jews because he 'stirred up the

people' with teaching new interpretations of the ancient creed, and that Paul and Silas hardly escaped the same fate at the hands of their own countrymen because they 'turned the world upside down' with the same pestilent heresies. Is it not time that the world learned from experience not to 'stone the prophets?'

"For the sake of the power and influence of the Christian Church I would like to see it cast off the trammels of old superstitions and of doctrines sanctioned only by imperfect knowledge and imperfect thinking and sanctified only by time and tradition. The sanctifying processes of time are inverted, and the inexperience of the race is placed above its experience, its ignorance above its knowledge, its credulity above its reason. Not only would the widening of the limits of the Church by clearing away the old barriers of crumbling creeds bring in a mighty force now excluded, but it would bring the Church into closer contact with the mass of humanity that needs to be reclaimed from ignorance and from in-

iquity, and would set new and powerful agencies at work for the regeneration of society.

"Powerful as is delusion, persistent as is superstition, obstinate as is credulity, I believe the day has come in the progress of civilization, when the old system of promises and threats, whose fulfilment depended on belief or unbelief in things incredible, has lost its power, and when knowledge and reason, sympathy and help, are the proper weapons with which to carry on the conquests of salvation for the human race. I am not for tearing down nor for building up, but for recognizing growth and progress, and allowing the old and dead material to slough off and go to decay instead of trying to plaster and bind it on in an ineffectual effort to put a stop to growth and vital development.

"Universal toleration and enlightenment and the co-operation of all devout and earnest souls in the work of salvation in this world is what I would like to see, confident that, whatever may be the destiny of man in another life, this would

be the most effectual means of insuring his eternal well-being."

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I have failed to give any adequate idea of the Judge's farewell discourse, but I have struggled with my memory and my scrappy and illegible notes to the best of my ability. I have the comfort of knowing that if he ever sees what I have written it will be some months before he can call me to account, and by that time he will probably not think it worth while.

With this final religious symposium our midnight gatherings are broken up, and I do not know that they will ever be renewed. Even if they are, I shall probably forsake this impertinent function of "giving away" what is said, and content myself with being merely an edified listener.

## XVIII.

### TOM GETS SOME WORDS OF COMFORT FROM THE JUDGE.

It must have been fully five months after the Judge's departure for Europe,—when vacation trips and summer diversions were past, and we were all settled down for the working season, to what the official proclamations used to call our "customary avocations,"—that I met Tom Benedict at the Club late one Saturday night, and asked him what he had heard from his old friend. For my part I had sweltered through the summer, when others of our circle were diverting themselves, and had been away in the early weeks of the autumn upon my own "business and desire," such as it was. Tom replied that the Judge had been detained abroad longer than he had expected and would not return for some time yet.

"But," he said, "I have lately had a

long letter from him, the longest, I will venture to say, of a merely personal character, that he ever wrote. You remember that religious discussion we carried on here last spring in the small hours of Saturday nights? Well, the fact is, I couldn't get it out of my head. In the summer I was all the time thinking about those questions and reading up on them and trying to settle them to my satisfaction; for, although at our last symposium I thought I had got myself all straightened out, I found that it was not altogether so. But the more I read and thought, the more unsettled I seemed to get; and at last in sheer desperation I concluded to write a long letter to the Judge about my 'state of mind.' I sent it to his Paris address but it reached him at Amalfi, where, he says, it caught him while indulging in a spell of 'loafing and inviting his soul' in the quaint and picturesque old monastery there, a portion of which has been turned into a sort of hostelry for far-wandering tourists. It was lucky my screed did catch him there, for if he had had anything to do but

'loaf and invite his soul,' I should never have got that long letter from him. Come up to the house to-morrow night, and I will show it to you."

So, on Sunday evening I once more invaded Tom's sanctified domicile,—sanctified, I mean, by the Sabbath-intensifying presence of his wife, who struck me, however, as gradually acquiring a little more of a this-world air and manner. The subtle barrier between us didn't seem to be quite so impenetrable as formerly; but the letter was the main object of my quest. I read it with a great deal of interest, and got Tom's permission to bring away a copy of such parts of it as I wished.

The writer made scant reference to his travels and his business, but was allured into a brief description of the soothing charms of his "loafing" place. The main purpose of the letter, however, was to respond to Tom's anxious questionings. Tom did not himself enlarge upon these to me, and I was left to surmise them from the Judge's reply. I determined with Tom's consent, which he

granted with some misgiving as to the propriety of the course, to supplement my reports of those midnight discussions with some extracts from this letter. I may as well assume that the reader has as much acumen in inferring the nature of the questionings from the character of the response, as I had to exercise, and leave him to the same liberty of surmise.

A good deal of the letter had direct reference to Tom's troubles of mind over the theological doctrines and questions which had been the subject of the Club talks, and presented in a connected, concise and lucid way the substance of the Judge's "views," as previously indicated, but the passages which seem to me worth quoting as a supplement to the "talks" are those which follow:

"Now, my dear Tom, nothing could be further from my wish than to unsettle the religious faith of any man. I only want to see faith brought into conformity with knowledge and reason, which alone can afford a solid and enduring basis for it. While growing out of earlier stocks,

it ought to have the vitality of the present age in it, advancing with knowledge and the results of reason, and not be a petrified heritage of the past, shaped largely by ignorance and superstition. We have a continuous 'revelation' and we ought to have a continuous 'scripture.' Haven't we as much right to our seers and prophets, our teachers and guides, with the privilege of original thought and of interpreting the Divine will, as any ancient people?

"I quite agree with you as to those 'fundamentals of all religious faith,' but I do not quite see what they have to do with these controverted doctrines over which men have wrangled so long. I have two great arguments as to the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, which long ago satisfied my mind, and I am quite at rest on those questions. There is one thing of which we have absolute knowledge, and that is our own existence, with the qualities, capabilities and tendencies of which we are conscious, and which we see exhibited by others; and we have a tolerably accurate

knowledge of the things and conditions about us. We can enlarge and extend our knowledge indefinitely, but we are finite and cannot comprehend everything. Now I have right here, in myself, a sufficient starting point for a proof of the existence of God, which is more conclusive to my mind than any other. I cannot conceive of myself, with those qualities which we call intellectual, moral and spiritual, as existing without God; yet here I am. No knowledge of matter and force and no reasoning upon these can lead up to an explanation of man and his life. This 'piece of work' must have had its origin with a creative power that had to an infinite degree the qualities to impart with which man is endowed. Otherwise, to me the origin of man's spirit is inconceivable; and the one sure thing is that it exists.

"We cannot altogether 'find out God,' for we cannot grasp the infinite; we can only form conceptions, limited and shaped by our knowledge and our power of reasoning. I look upon the conceptions of a Deity as purely a matter of

evolution, varying and developing from age to age. As I have often said, the God of Moses is a different being from the God of the later prophets, and of Job, and most of the Psalms; the God of the 'old dispensation' is quite a different being from the God 'revealed' in the New Testament; and the ideal of the Supreme Divinity has gone through many changes in the teachings of the Christian Church, from primitive times even until now. Doubtless, He is the same, yesterday, to-day and forever, but man's conception of him is as multiform as the degrees of man's knowledge and his ignorance, his superstition and his wisdom.

"You say well, that worship is a necessity of man's nature in his struggle for a higher life, and that we cannot worship an abstraction. Nobody does worship an abstraction; but everybody who worships at all worships the highest and best concrete conception of the Deity that he can form, even if he has to put it into wood or stone and make it visible to his eye. I cannot worship a Being like that whom Moses is said to have seen in a

burning bush and who was supposed to literally thunder commands and threats from Mount Sinai; who was 'jealous' of other gods that were assumed in the record to be equally real; who was vengeful against his enemies; who 'commanded' one people to slaughter another and was placated by bloody sacrifices and burnt-offerings. Neither can I worship the God to whom David prayed in his imprecatory Psalms; or Him whom the prophets represented as 'punishing' Israel by conquest and captivity, and promising restoration and glory; or the Being that is represented to have demonstrated his justice in the afflictions of Job. I find it equally difficult to lift my soul up to the God of the popes, or of Calvin, or Milton, or Knox, or Jonathan Edwards. All these various 'Gods' have been the conceptions of men; and they differ from mine. What I say is that we should use all our knowledge and all our reason in forming the highest conception of the Deity that we can reach, and the form and spirit of our worship will be none the worse for it. If God has been revealed to

us it is in our nature and our lives, in all creation and all history, and the revelation comes through knowledge and reason, and is fuller to-day then ever before. Your ancient dogmas and doctrines seem to me a feeble support for a faith in the existence of God, and quite unnecessary to it.

"My second great argument is for the immortality of the soul, and is like unto the other. It simply follows from the other as a natural consequence. That I exist I know; therefore I believe that I was created by God, whom I conceive of as infinite in power, wisdom and goodness. I find it quite inconsistent with such a belief to accept this imperfect life as all for which I was made. I cannot explain this mundane existence at all without assuming that it is preparatory for another or a continued life; and on that assumption I have no great difficulty with its problems. I have no fear of anything that science or research, reason or philosophy, can do to unsettle these 'fundamental' matters in religion. In fact I believe that the more we know and the

more clearly we think, the more we must be confirmed in the conviction that the existence of God and the immortality of the soul afford the only reasonable explanation of things as they are; and things as they are constitute an argument which it is extremely difficult to get around.

"Stick, my boy, to your 'fundamentals' and your 'essentials,' but define them clearly in your own mind and you will find that they are untouched by the warfare waged over matters of doctrinal belief.

"The Messianic hopes of Israel and the dreams of apocalyptic writers were woven by the founders of Christian dogma with the obscure facts of the birth of Jesus, the luminous teachings of his lips, the marvellous power of his life and character as an example to mankind, the legends of his wonder-working, the appalling stroke of his atrocious death at the hands of religious bigotry, and the belief attributed by tradition to his devoted followers that he had risen from the tomb and ascended into heaven to prepare for

the coming of his kingdom in glory upon the earth. Out of these elements was produced the mysticism of early Christianity, at a time when no religious system could hope to gain a hold upon mankind without mysticism. With the intellectual and moral progress of later times, this mysticism has been modified by councils and by teachers, and has gone through Protean evolutions to the production of forms of faith and sects innumerable; and in the great body of the church many doctrines that could by no possibility in the light of this day be deduced from the record or the facts, have been held sacred with the tenacity of a superstitious conservatism.

"But through all this fabric of man-made theologies strikes the light of scientific and critical research, of knowledge and reason, in these waning days of the nineteenth century; and behind the flaming torch of enlightened thought follows the plain daylight of common sense, dispersing the owls and bats of ancient superstition, the spectres and hobgoblins of a distorted faith. But the expanding

light in no way obscures the central figure of that great Teacher, who rose upon the world from the Galilean hamlet, and in golden words set the point of departure for a new religion of humanity. On the contrary, it dispels mists from around it, revivifies it from petrifaction, and makes it capable of a new power for the regeneration of the race.

"'Believe in me and ye shall be saved,' calls for no faith in doctrines of inspiration, of future reward and punishment, of miraculous birth and death, of vicarious atonement, or in any of the mystic dogmas that were woven into our inherited theological systems. It requires no abnegation of the intellect or the conscience of reasoning men. Faith in that large doctrine of the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, purity of life, sacrifice of self, and devotion to the common good as taught by Jesus, can never be outgrown by the human race; nor is the race likely to have a higher exemplar of that doctrine to look up to than the marvellous Man of Nazareth, who announced it with such confident and persuasive

words, and who died a victim to the unreadiness of his age to accept it. The world is yet far from reaching his ground.

"What, then, is the Church to do? The changing and revision of creeds is a perplexing task. But there is no occasion for undertaking it. The world does not want new creeds devised by fallible men to stem the tide of progress. It wants the 'ever open door,' the ample page of knowledge freely spread, the full light of reason, and the liberty to believe what it finds to be true. There is no occasion to dig out the strata of the earth's crust and to get rid of the fossils of ages past, in order to utilize the fruitful surface where life goes on. The 'testimony of the rocks' is invaluable, as history, for instruction in the present and guidance for the future. Let the church of universal humanity, built up through the ages with the materials that each age afforded, open wide its doors to all who seek the true and the good, who wish to promote right conduct in themselves and others, and who desire to co-operate for the elevation and improvement of mankind;

and let no test for membership be required except the ordinary evidences of good faith. Leave to men absolute liberty to study, to think, and to believe that only of which they are honestly convinced; invite them into church fellowship without mental shackles, and Christianity will start into new and vigorous life.

"That free thinking should be regarded as inconsistent with true religion, is a strange anomaly for an enlightened age. Free thought is an essential factor in true religion, and should be encouraged out of consideration for the good of mankind. The fullest attainable knowledge of what has been and what is, the freest exercise of the faculties with which man has been endowed, and the clearest results of our best reasoning, cannot but lead toward the everlasting truth, and can by no possibility be inconsistent with the will of the Supreme Power of the universe.

"What common sense dictates to the Christian Church to-day, is not to revise its creeds and amend its dogmas, but to cast off altogether from them as a test of

the fitness of men to teach religion, or of the right of men to associate in its work and share in its benefits. Let membership depend upon purpose as shown in character, not belief; and let the creeds drift into the 'dark backward and abysm of time,' with the Delphic oracles and the mummeries of the Middle Ages. Let men learn what they can and believe what they must with the record of the past and the knowledge of the present to aid them.

"What then would the Church gain, and what would it become? It would gain the best intellect and the highest zeal which the living generation can afford, and it would open its bosom to the currents of light and of progress that the expanding revelation of science and reason is sending forth. From these it would draw life and strength for its great work of elevating and purifying human character and conduct. That is its proper work in the world. It should return to the idea of 'salvation' as originally proclaimed—salvation from sin in this world, and not from punishment in an-

other; for it is the dictate of common sense that, whatever may be the truth about immortality and a life to follow death, the condition of the human soul hereafter must inevitably depend upon the condition it attains here. If it can be made sound and healthy for this life—'here on this bank and shoal of time,' it cannot but be safe for the life to come; for if the soul is released from corporal bonds to live on in eternity, it can undergo no transformation by the process, else were the experiences of this life without purpose. Right conduct and pure character must needs be the condition of happiness in all possible worlds, and should therefore be the sole object of religious teaching.

"If the gospel of salvation be directed to the saving of the human race from vice and crime, from wrong-doing in its many forms, and from the miseries of poverty, ignorance, and misfortune consequent upon the weakness of human nature, through the application of that all-embracing doctrine of the sacrifice of self, and of doing good to others,—which is the

essence of that 'love' perfectly illustrated by Jesus and eloquently preached by Paul, —it will manifestly hasten the coming of the kingdom of God on earth, and promote the safety of surviving souls, regardless of beliefs about the 'undiscovered country.'

"Do not think, my dear Thomas, that I am disposed to disregard the spiritual nature of man or to overlook its force and importance in the development of human society; nor that I underrate the element of worship in religion or its necessity in uplifting men in their character and conduct here. In all our talks and in this letter, which I marvel at myself for writing in this balmy and soothing Mediterranean air, I have felt myself called upon to deal only with what seemed to me to be errors of opinion and of belief, which have come to stand in the way of reaching the springs of human action and stirring them in a salutary manner through appeals to the religious nature.

"But, my dear fellow, keep this firmly in mind: it does not matter so tremen-

dously what one finds himself forced to believe in regard to controverted questions of doctrine. Why should any person be worried or distressed because he is compelled to doubt what he has been taught to regard as true and what he has devoutly accepted because it was taught? Our minds ought always to be open to new light, and if it dazzles at first it is because we have been accustomed to shut it out. I fully appreciate what you say about the part which sentiment and emotion play in all matters religious, but I am so constituted that I cannot understand why sentiment should not be as pure and exalted, and emotion as fervid and uplifting, when appealed to in the daylight of the understanding and the reason, as when excited in the darkness of mental obscurity or the groping of a blindfold faith. Nothing is easier than to be deceived and misled in the dark; and it is surely safer to go with open eyes, in the fullest light we can get. If the emotional action of sentiment becomes thereby less intense and nervous, it will be more salutary and more joyous.

'Let not thy heart be troubled,' my son, but keep thyself from that pestilent state that frets and worries over doubts that touch not the sacred truths of Everlasting Good. Take thy studyings and thy thinkings calmly, as behooves a man of sense, and deal honestly with thy soul. * * *

"Gently dost thou hint at the 'woman in the case!' Ah! but can we not learn—men and women—that we may have separate minds and separate souls, with common sympathies? I would not have thee

> 'with shadowed hint confuse
> A life that leads melodious days.'

"It is by making too much of doubts and differences, and too little of common purposes and aims, that the sons and daughters of Adam draw apart. Respect the faith of thy precious wife, and also thine own; but *fear not the truth*, in whatever aspect it may appear. It is thy friend and should be thy guide, and it goeth ever towards the fullest light.

"Until again I can look into thine eyes and speak to thine ear direct, I pray, dear Tom, that I may remain a friend in whom thy trust need not waver.

"GAMALIEL TRUMAN."

A week or two later, I had a long talk with my friend Thomas, when we were by ourselves in the inner room of the Asphodel Club, where we had been wont to listen to the calm discourses of the Judge. Tom seemed to have reached a stage of repose, and his content was apparently quite restored.

"I tell you what it is," he said to me at last, "I am surprised at myself. I hardly know where I have been these last few years, or what I have been thinking of. In fact, I don't seem to have been thinking. When I come to talk with people of my acquaintance upon these topics and the views of my old friend, Judge Truman, I find a wonderful readiness to acquiesce in them, in most points. People who really give attention to these questions seem to be coming to about

the same conclusions, and the old traditions haven't such a very strong hold after all. Even clergymen—especially those who are proving their 'call to preach' by gathering people who are 'called to hear'—I have found to be quite familiar with arguments that were new to me, and quite tolerant of the conclusions to which they lead. I really believe a theological revolution is coming, or rather that it has already begun; and I have concluded that I am in favor of the revolution, under the guidance of wise heads and devout souls."

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Parting with Tom at the street corner I proceeded to my lonely lodgings, musing upon the Judge's calm confidence in the conclusions of his study and my more youthful friend's swift approach to the same broad ground. I could not but be reminded—and finding deep satisfaction in the remembrance—of the great poet's friend,

> "Who touch'd a jarring lyre at first
> But ever strove to make it true.

"He fought his doubts and gather'd strength,
He would not make his judgment blind;
He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them: thus he came at length

"To find a stronger faith his own;
And Power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone."

THE END.

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